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Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6984th meeting

Monday, 24, June 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Hague	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Ms. Vallaud-Belkacem
	Guatemala	Mr. Carrera
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Amrani
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	Togo	Mr. Kandangha-Bariki
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Letter dated 7 June 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2013/335)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Letter dated 7 June 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2013/335)

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Ministers and the other representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their participation is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine and Uruguay to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar, of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite Archbishop Francis Assisi Chullikatt, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting in accordance with the Council's provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in that regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2013/368, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2013/335, which contains the text of a letter dated 7 June 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Foreign Secretary Hague, for presiding over this meeting during the United Kingdom's presidency of the Security Council. I commend the leadership and efforts of the United Kingdom in bringing key international support and momentum to the crucial fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

I also welcome the tireless work and advocacy of Ms. Angelina Jolie. For years, she has been a voice for the millions of people who are forced to flee their homes due to conflict, and now for the many survivors of wartime rape whose bodies have been used as battlegrounds.

I am pleased, too, that we are joined by Jane Adong Anywar, a lawyer and civil society activist who works to bring justice to victims of sexual violence in conflict. It is through the efforts of people like Ms. Anywar that we can end impunity for this crime and ensure that survivors get the legal redress they deserve.

Last month, I briefed the Council on my visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Council will recall that I visited the Heal Africa hospital in Goma, where I met women and girls who had been raped and maimed by armed groups on all sides of the conflict. Many had a condition called traumatic fistula. In plain terms, they had been torn inside. Experiencing great pain and often unable to control bladder and bowels, they are disabled and often shunned by society. Hospitals such as Heal Africa in Goma, and Panzi in Bukavu help rehabilitate such women. They mend their wounds and provide skills that can give them self-worth and a source of income; but they cannot protect them. That is a job for the Congolese authorities and the international community, in particular the Council. As we drove into the hospital the streets were lined with women. They were angry and they had a clear message: no more impunity; no more war; give us peace. They want us to hear and act on their appeal.

Sexual violence occurs wherever conflict rages. It has devastating effects on survivors and destroys the social fabric of whole communities. While women and girls suffer disproportionately from these vicious crimes, men and boys are also targeted. Sexual violence is a crime under international human rights law and a threat to international peace and security. When used as a weapon of war, it can significantly exacerbate conflict and seriously hamper reconciliation.

The international community, through resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), has put in place a solid framework for responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The mechanisms established enable us to carry out global advocacy through my Special Representative, in collaboration with the United Nations Action Network against Sexual Violence in Conflict, which she leads. Today's draft resolution sends yet another strong signal to perpetrators that their acts will no longer be tolerated. They will be held accountable.

Preventing sexual violence in conflict is our joint responsibility. It must be part of our work in many areas, from peacekeeping and political missions to mediation, ceasefire agreements, security sector reform, justice sector reform and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations system is committed to "Delivering as One", to end the culture of impunity that prevails in relation to sexual violence. On behalf of the Action Network, UN-Women and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have developed the first-ever scenario-based training programme for peacekeepers. A senior women's protection adviser will be deployed shortly within the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan to join those already in place, while others are soon to be deployed in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Somalia.

The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict is an important tool for strengthening national justice systems and legal frameworks. It has provided technical advice to authorities in the Central African Republic, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Somalia and South Sudan.UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund are leading the United Nations system in coordinating the provision of services for survivors. And the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN-Women are providing expertise for investigating and documenting gender-based violence.

Along with leadership and access to justice, understanding the extent of the problem is essential for effectively protecting women and girls.

I have consistently emphasized the importance of national ownership in preventing sexual violence. I call on all leaders at the highest political level to voice their unequivocal support for our cause and to follow up with deeds. That includes apprehending and prosecuting perpetrators to deter further crimes. It means helping survivors by improving medical, psychological, social and judicial assistance. And it entails providing the necessary resources to support the work of my Special Representative and other mechanisms.

Those who hold power and influence have a special duty to step forward and be part of a global coalition of champions determined to break this evil. Sexual violence is a vile, whenever and wherever it occurs. It must be exposed and met with the anger and action that it deserves.

I count on the Council's sustained leadership to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and survivors receive justice and support.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his statement. His personal commitment to this cause ensures that sexual violence in conflict remain a critical concern for the entire United Nations system, and challenges us to work in unison.

I would like to thank the Government of the United Kingdom, especially Foreign Secretary William Hague, for hosting this open debate on sexual violence in conflict and for being among the leading torch-bearers and champions for this agenda.

I also wish to thank Jane Adong Anywar for representing the essential work undertaken by civil society groups, which are on the front line of this battle every day. I also thank Angelina Jolie for being here today and standing in solidarity. Her voice is a light in the darkness for many survivors.

Twenty years ago, the United Nations provided irrefutable evidence that the widespread and systematic rape of women, girls and men was being perpetrated in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. That led to unprecedented advances in international jurisprudence — the recognition of rape as a war crime and crime against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunals established for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Two weeks ago, I visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, where an estimated 50,000 women were targeted with rape and other forms of sexual violence during four years of conflict. But 20 years after peace was re-established, impunity for those crimes still reigns. There have been only a handful of prosecutions. While the perpetrators have enjoyed the fruits of peace and have been free to rebuild their lives, their victims continue to work in the shadows and in shame, unable to lay the past to rest and to move forward.

In their day-to-day lives, survivors of sexual violence are forced to face the men who raped them — in banks, in supermarkets and at the schools of their children, children whose "inheritance" is the stigma of sexual violence, many of whom are offspring born of rape. Those women told me that they could look forward to the future when that future continued to be determined by many of the very people who had destroyed their lives.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the guns may have fallen silent 20 years ago, but for the survivors of sexual violence the war has not ended. Their battle continues as they struggle with physical and psychological injuries, stigma and isolation, poverty and destitution. That is what I have witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in many other countries devastated by war. Conflict-related sexual violence, when left unaddressed by justice and reparations, can have a profound impact on the sustainability of peace and the prospects for developments.

That is why the theme of today's debate — combating impunity for sexual violence — is of the utmost relevance and urgency. By focusing on impunity, we make a more concerted effort to put the spotlight on the perpetrators, that is, on those who commit, or command, or condone sexual violence in conflicts. In so doing, we begin to re-direct the stigma and the consequences of sexual violence from the survivors to the perpetrators.

Over the course of five years, we have seen significant progress at the political level, advances led largely by the Security Council. Its engagement has shattered an enduring myth that has paralysed action for too long, namely, that sexual violence is culturally or socially unspeakable, that it is an inevitable by-product of war for which little can be done, or that it does not merit such singular focus because in the hierarchy of human rights violations sexual violence is a lesser evil.

To the contrary, the resolutions of the Security Council affirm that this crime, when committed systematically and used as a tool of war, is a fundamental threat to the maintenance of international peace and security, and as such requires an operational, security and justice response. That paradigm shift requires a new approach to attack the scourge of war-time rape. Among other things, it compels us to expand the circle of stakeholders beyond the traditional gender experts, to also engage uniformed peacekeepers, mediators, ceasefire monitors, war-crime prosecutors and the full range of civilian-protection and justice-sector actors.

The draft resolution to be adopted by the Council today consolidates that approach. It reinforces the robust conceptual framework, the infrastructure and the elements of the compliance regime established by resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) — a compliance regime based on reliable and timely information and analysis, and the political, strategic and tactical-level actions that must be taken on the basis of such information. In its scope, operational detail and clarity, the draft resolution encapsulates the evolution of our understanding of conflict-related sexual violence and what it takes to prevent it. As such it, outlines a comprehensive operational approach to tackle the problem.

The draft resolution places emphasis on a more consistent and rigorous investigation and prosecution of sexual violence crimes as a central aspect of deterrence and, ultimately, prevention. Essentially, we must raise the cost and consequences for those who commit such crimes. The draft resolution also stresses that considerations of sexual violence must be explicitly and consistently reflected in peace processes, ceasefires and peace agreements. That gives fundamental recognition to the principle that there can be no viable peace and security when the security of women is not at the heart of peacemaking.

The draft resolution emphasizes that sexual violence must be specifically reflected in other critical peace and security processes and arrangements, such as security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. That includes ensuring that those who commit, command or condone sexual violence be vetted and excluded from positions of influence and power.

The draft resolution emphasizes the need for comprehensive and multidimensional strategies for us to meet our obligations to the survivors of sexual violence — the critical health, psychosocial, legal and other interventions that they must have to rebuild their lives.

Crucially, the draft resolution calls on all parties to a conflict to make specific commitments to prevent sexual violence, and challenges the United Nations to engage with parties to illicit such commitments. Such an engagement-based approach has already begun to yield results, with several formal agreements between the United Nations and affected countries to address conflict-related sexual violence.

The United Nations Team of Experts plays an important role in that regard, serving as a ready resource for national authorities in their efforts to strengthen the rule-of-law response to sexual violence. That is proving to be an innovative and valuable tool for Governments, and should be further reinforced. In the coming months, we also hope to accelerate the deployment of women's protection advisers to the relevant United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions. The women's protection advisers are a new cadre of specialists combining political and security expertise, human rights monitoring and gender analysis. Their principal role is to catalyse the implementation of the key operational aspects of the Council's resolutions on sexual violence in conflict.

Since taking office, in September 2012, I have placed particular emphasis on engaging national stakeholders in order to foster national ownership, leadership and responsibility. My experience to date reinforces my belief that it is at the country level that will and resolve are most urgently required to implement national legislation, strengthen institutions for the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence and to enhance capacity to care for survivors.

I cannot overemphasize that the commitment of the United Nations system, however great it may be, can never substitute for the political will and action of national actors. The United Nations, through the United Nations Action Network of 13 entities, stands ready to support local efforts. But national actors must lead from the front, and the international community must support their efforts with adequate resources and technical assistance.

Today it is still largely cost-free to rape a woman, child or man in conflict. Sexual violence has been used throughout the ages precisely because it is such a cheap and devastating weapon. But for the first time in history, we can reverse that reality. It will require leadership and political courage, and a relentless determination to match the cold, calculating brutality of those who would rape the innocent for military or political gain.

I believe that we have the collective will, and increasingly the tools, to make it an unsustainable liability for parties to use sexual violence as a weapon of war. The resolve of the Council and the international community as a whole has set us firmly on the path of accountability and prevention. We must stay the course until we achieve the critical mass of action that will turn the tide on history's oldest and least condemned crime.

The President: I thank Ms. Bangura for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Jolie.

Ms. Jolie: It is an honour to address the Security Council. I thank Foreign Secretary Hague for the United Kingdom's leadership, and Zainab Bangura, Special

Representative for her important and extraordinary work.

The Security Council was established 67 years ago and has witnessed 67 years of wars and conflict, but the world has yet to take up war-zone rape as a serious priority. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of women, children and men have been raped in conflicts in our lifetimes. The numbers are so vast and the subject so painful that we often have to stop to remember that behind each number is someone with a name, a personality, a story and dreams no different from ours and those of our children.

Let us be clear what we are speaking about: young girls raped and impregnated before their bodies are able to carry a child, causing fistula; boys held at gunpoint and forced to sexually assault their mothers and sisters; women raped with bottles, wood branches and knives to cause as much damage as possible; toddlers, even babies, dragged from their homes and violated.

I will never forget the survivors whom I have met or what they told me — the mother in Goma whose five-year-old daughter had been raped outside a police station in plain view, or the Syrian woman I met in Jordan last week who asked that I hide her name and face because she knew that if she spoke out against the crimes against her, she would be attacked and possibly killed.

Rape is a tool of war. It is an act of aggression and a crime against humanity. It is inflicted intentionally to destroy the woman, the family and the community. It ruins lives and fuels conflict. The Charter of the United Nations is clear; the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Rape as a weapon of war is an assault on security, and a world in which these crimes happen is one in which there is not and never will be peace. Addressing war-zone sexual violence is therefore the Council's responsibility, as well as the duty of the Governments and countries afflicted by it. In fact, the truth is that in many conflict situations there is no Government to take responsibility, so there is no protection and no accountability. When Governments cannot act, the Security Council must step in and provide leadership and assistance. For those crimes happen not because they are inherent to war, but because the global climate allows it.

That five-year-old girl was raped because her attacker knew that he would get away with it. Because the world has not treated sexual violence as a priority, there have only been a handful of prosecutions for the many hundreds of thousands of survivors. They suffer most at the hands of their rapists, but they are also victims of a culture of impunity. That is the sad, upsetting and, indeed, shameful reality.

I understand that there are many things that are difficult for the Security Council to agree on, but sexual violence in conflict should not be one of them. That it is a crime to rape young children is not something that I imagine anyone in the Chamber would not be able to agree on. The rights and wrongs of the issue are straightforward, and the actions that need to be taken have been identified. What is needed is political will, and that is what is being asked of Member States today: to act on the knowledge of what is right and what is unjust and to show the determination to do something about it. Every country in the world is affected by sexual violence in one form or another, from domestic abuse to female genital mutilation. All countries therefore have a responsibility to step forward, but the starting point must be the Security Council, shouldering its responsibilities and showing leadership. To women in refugee camps or those struggling to survive in war-torn communities, there is no greater power in the world that can stand by them. That young Syrian rape victim is here because the Council represents her. That five-year-old child in the Congo must count because the Council represents her. In her eyes, if her attacker gets away with his crimes, it is because the Council has allowed it. The Council sets the bar. If the Security Council sets rape and sexual violence in conflict as a priority, it will become one, and progress will be made. If it does not, this horror will continue.

I thank and encourage those countries that are already setting a powerful example. My plea to all members of the Council is to adopt and implement the draft resolution that is before the members today, so that the perpetrators are finally held to account and survivors can at last feel that they are on safer ground. Please, do not let the issue fall to the wayside when leaving the Chamber. Meet your commitments; debate the issue in your Parliaments; mobilize people in your countries and built it into all your foreign policy efforts, so that together you can turn the tide of global opinion, shatter impunity and finally put an end to this abhorrence.

The President: I thank Ms. Jolie for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Anywar.

Ms. Anywar: I represent the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, where I work as a legal monitor in our Ugandan programme assessing the progress and challenges in establishing an effective national mechanism to try conflict-related crimes, including sexual violence, in the Ugandan context.

The Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice is an international women's human rights organization that advocates for gender justice through the International Criminal Court (ICC) and domestic mechanisms. In addition, we also advocate for the participation of women and the integration of gender provisions within peace processes and reconciliation efforts from the perspective of victims/survivors and women's rights activists in armed conflict situations.

The paucity of domestic prosecutions for crimes of sexual violence, the limited volume of international prosecutions for these crimes and the scale worldwide of crimes of sexualized violence, particularly in situations of armed conflict, continue to leave an impunity gap so distinct that in recent years it has become the focus of several Security Council resolutions. The attention given by the Council to sexual violence is necessary and urgent, and with developments such as the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the work of the International Criminal Court, attention to this issue is becoming increasingly strategic.

Over the past 27 years, northern Uganda and several of its neighbouring countries, including South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been subjected to armed conflict, instability, displacement of the population and widespread and brutal forms of sexual and gender-based crimes committed by a range of perpetrators, including armed forces, militia groups and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

In the past decade of our work, the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice has worked with thousands of victims/survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and monitored accountability for such crimes in several conflict or post-conflict countries. With more than 6,000 grass-roots members and partners within armed conflict situations, we are aware of the demand from local communities for a reduction in impunity and more frequent domestic trials for perpetrators responsible for committing sexual violence and other grave crimes. Drawing on all of this work, there are three observations I would like to offer today regarding accountability for sexual violence in armed conflicts.

The first is that it is well documented that the commission of rape and other forms of sexual violence intensify and increase during times of civil war and armed conflicts, and yet too often impunity for these crimes continues to be guaranteed through amnesty laws. Let me provide an example from Uganda.

Under the Ugandan Amnesty Act of 2000, complete amnesty was extended to members of the LRA on the condition that they report to a designated area, surrender their weapons and make a declaration renouncing and abandoning involvement in the war or armed rebellion. Unfortunately, there were no conditions regarding truth-telling; individuals were not required to make a full declaration of the acts they had committed or the incidents they might have witnessed; and no crimes, including sexual violence, were excluded from qualification under the amnesty regime. Victims did not even receive an apology through this process. The granting of amnesty guaranteed impunity and therefore did not shift the stigma of shame away from the survivors to the perpetrators of these crimes. The pardoning facility under the Amnesty Act was dissolved last year, but while in existence, it provided blanket immunity from prosecution for sexual violence and other crimes for the entire period of the Ugandan LRA conflict.

The second observation we would like to make is that leadership on accountability for conflict-related crimes, including sexual violence, must be provided at the national level, with priority given to resourcing, adequate legislation prohibiting acts of sexual violence and capacity-building for police, investigators, lawyers and judges regarding the adjudication of these crimes. The inclusion of credible national prosecutions for conflict-related crimes, including acts of sexual violence, within the basket of accountability and reconciliation initiatives is crucial for locating justice in proximity to victims. Just as crucial is that domestic courts prosecuting these international crimes do so in compliance with the established international standards.

Let me again draw on our experience in Uganda. In 2011, the International Crimes Division within Uganda became operational, with the jurisdiction to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in compliance with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The creation of that domestic war crimes court was welcomed by large sections of the community, in particular women's rights and peace advocates, who described the court as comforting for victims and a milestone in raising hopes and expectations for the realization of justice and meaningful peace.

Since then, the Ugandan court has adopted some of the procedures practiced by the ICC, including the use of redacted statements to support witness safety in proceedings and in the practices regarding the disclosure of evidence. These processes are new under the Ugandan rules of procedure and are helping to strengthen the understanding that successful witness and victim protection is at the core of any efficient investigation and prosecution.

However, there are also challenges at the national level when attempting to prosecute conflict-related crimes, including sexual violence. These can include lack of jurisdiction for the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity, perhaps a lack of familiarity of the judiciary with the provisions relating to sexual violence, ongoing myths regarding sexualized violence and, sometimes, one-sided prosecutions depending on the outcome of the conflict. There can also be challenges related to the practice and administration of justice, and in Uganda, this has meant a lack of court reporters, professional interpreters and the management of transcripts.

Some of these issues are resource and capacity-related, which leads me to my third observation, which is that the scale of sexual violence crimes committed during armed conflict is beyond the capacity of any national judicial system to address on its own.

Domestic efforts must be complemented by effective international prosecutions; United Nations interventions empowered to engage militias and other perpetrators of these crimes; effective protection mechanisms for civilians, including those targeting sexual violence; cooperative regional bodies; and, above all, compliance by the United Nations and Member States with their collective resolutions and recommendations on security, women, peace and the prevention of and response to acts of sexual violence.

Implementing the existing resolutions regarding the commission of sexual violence in armed conflict, highlighting its impact on those targeted by these crimes, especially girls and women, and addressing the purpose of this particular form of violence are essential steps for effecting change in this crisis.

The President: I thank Ms. Anywar for her briefing.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, China, France, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Togo, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2106 (2013).

I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom.

I should like to thank the Secretary-General and some of my fellow Ministers for attending this debate; the fact that more than 50 countries wish to take part in this open debate once the Security Council members have spoken shows the growing global interest and determination to act on this issue.

I pay tribute to Zainab Bangura for the energy, determination and vision that she has brought to her role; to Angelina Jolie for her inspirational work on behalf of the world's refugees and for campaigning with me to end rape and sexual violence in conflict; and to Jane Adong Anywar for her courageous work and powerful testimony.

In conflicts in nearly every corner of the globe, rape is used systematically and ruthlessly in the almost certain knowledge that there will be no consequences for the perpetrators. If the international community does not address this culture of impunity, millions more women, children and men could well be subjected to the same appalling treatment, now and in the conflicts of the future. The lead we set and the action we take therefore has the potential to save lives and change the course of events around the world; nothing less than that should be our ambition.

As the international community, we curbed the development of nuclear weapons, heading off a once threatened and unstoppable wave of insecurity. We have binding Conventions against the use of torture and on the treatment of prisoners. We have outlawed the use of chemical weapons and imposed a global ban on cluster munitions. We have made progress in choking off the trade in conflict diamonds, which undermines many fragile countries. Here in the Security Council we adopted historic resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and this year we agreed a historic Arms Trade Treaty, to stem the illegal arms trade that exacerbates conflict and causes such human misery.

No country could tackle those vast problems alone, and we have shown that we can confront them together.

Today we face another burning need to unite to improve the condition of humanity; together it is time to say that rape and sexual violence used as a weapon of war is unacceptable, that we know it can be prevented and that we will act now to eradicate it, shouldering our responsibilities as national Governments, and collectively as the Security Council.

Sexual violence is used to destroy lives, tear apart communities and achieve military objectives, in just the same way that tanks and bullets are.

Like others here I have witnessed the terrible life sentence of trauma and illness inflicted on victims, and the devastating impact on their families and communities.

I am appalled that the vast majority of survivors never receive justice, support or recognition despite years and even decades of waiting, and that it is the victims, not the perpetrators, who still bear the shame and stigma.

I have also seen the devastating impact that sexual violence has on prospects for peace and reconciliation, undermining our efforts as the Security Council to advance peace negotiations and agreements.

We have seen the world over that unresolved grievances fuel further cycles of violence and conflict. Where there is no justice or dignity, the seeds of future violence are sown. A new consciousness of this issue and strong action to protect women and children must run throughout all the Security Council's peacebuilding efforts.

I pay tribute to the organizations and individuals who have worked for years so that the world knows and understands the scale of rape and sexual violence in conflict, and have helped persuade Governments to take it seriously, as many of us are now doing. I applaud the local organizations that are on the front line of efforts to support survivors and achieve accountability, and which need our active support and assistance.

Their efforts, allied with new attention from Governments and efforts by the United Nations, means that we are at last poised to be able to make unprecedented and historic progress on confronting wartime rape and sexual violence.

We have made important progress. In London in April, the States members of the Group of Eight (G-8) pledged to address sexual violence in conflict as a threat to global peace and security. I am grateful for the commitments they joined the United Kingdom in making and for the work that is flowing from that agreement.

For example, the United Kingdom is now taking the lead in developing a new international protocol on the investigation and documentation of rape and sexual violence in conflict, working with experts from all over the world. Its aim is to increase the number of successful prosecutions by setting out practical standards for the investigation and documentation of such crimes, so that the strongest possible evidence is collected and survivors are cared for sensitively.

We have also set up a team of over 70 United Kingdom experts, including doctors, forensic scientists, police and gender experts, which can be deployed to reinforce United Nations and national efforts. It has already been deployed in Bosnia, to the Syrian border, and to Libya, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo this year. Later this year we will carry out further deployments to support Syrian survivors, and we will return to Bosnia, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are determined to continue and build on those efforts as the United Kingdom and to build new partnerships with countries also working in this area. But we need global action if we are to shatter the culture of impunity.

That is why we have put this issue at the heart of our presidency this month, and why I also intend to convene a global gathering on this issue during the session of the General Assembly in September.

Resolution 2106 (2013), which we have just adopted today, sends a powerful signal to the world of leadership from the Security Council. It recognizes the commitments made in the G-8 declaration, which will add to the international momentum that has begun to gather but which must now become unstoppable. It recognizes the responsibility of national Governments to uphold human rights and the rule of law in their countries, and it will expand the tools available to Ms. Bangura to work with them, notably the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, which have shown great courage in signing joint communiqués with the United Nations.

The resolution also recognizes that effective investigation and documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict is vital to bringing perpetrators to justice and ensuring recourse to justice for survivors, and I hope that the new international protocol will be able to make a difference in that area.

I hope that there will also be new commitments by countries around the world support the deployment of professionals with expertise in the way I have described.

These and other steps listed in the resolution, if fully implemented, will represent vital new advances. But it is only a beginning. We need action on all fronts, from the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole, and from Governments in conflict-affected countries. We need to begin to demolish impunity, create a new culture of deterrence, and at the same time focus on long-term care and support for survivors.

We need to home in on lack of accountability as one of the root causes of rape and sexual violence in conflict, but at the same time not forget that women's political, social and economic empowerment across all societies is essential and that our goal must be the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

We need the Security Council to keep showing the determined leadership that we have called for, and at the same time must listen to, involve and support local organizations. Indeed, I strongly support the development of a network of regional champions to support their efforts.

Of course, all countries must do more to address violence against women in all its forms, and not just in conflict situations.

We can and must do all those things but must never lose sight of our overriding objective: to consign the use of rape as a weapon of war to the pages of history. I believe that has to begin, above all, with a focus on ending impunity and by bringing to bear the weight, authority and leadership of the Security Council.

Building on today's debate, I have new hope that this will at last be possible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Carrera (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am very pleased and honoured to be participating once again in an open debate of the Security Council. My presence here on this occasion is due to several reasons.

First, it is a clear signal of our continued support for this United Nations forum. Secondly, it is in response to Secretary Hague's kind and timely personal invitation, extended some months ago when we met in London to discuss various multilateral issues of mutual interest to the United Kingdom and Guatemala; this issue in particular was very high on the agenda on that occasion. Thirdly, it highlights the importance of the issue, which was also addressed during our presidency of the Council last October, during which the Council issued presidential statement S/PRST/2012/23.

Fourthly, I should say that in my professional life I have always been concerned with the grave problem of violence against women in general and on the impact it has on every aspect of economic and social development. This type of violence, which is particularly associated with the impunity that results from weak rule of law institutions, will surely form part, among other things, of the post-2015 development agenda that we will be debating in the General Assembly. Finally, I can state that President Otto Pérez Molina views combating violence against women as an absolute priority of his Government. If we do not eradicate gender violence we will not have security and peace in Guatemala or anywhere else in the world.

Before moving on, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the concept note you have circulated (S/2013/335, annex), and to express our appreciation to the briefers we have heard today, especially Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Ms. Zainab Bangura. We are also grateful for the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2013/149), and would like to express our appreciation to the delegations of India and Rwanda for having organized debates on the subject during their respective presidencies in November 2012 and April this year.

Sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is an unacceptable phenomenon, a crime against humanity, and an insult to the world's conscience, as expressed through the actions of the Security Council and every organ of the United Nations. It has been the subject of numerous debates, presidential statements and resolutions of the Council in this very Chamber. Its development is built on the basic premise of resolution 1325 (2000), which is that without security for women, lasting peace is impossible. That was followed by resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), and has culminated today in the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), aimed at expanding the conceptual framework of the struggle against this scourge. At the same time, we have established concrete policies, including the creation of the post presently occupied by Ms. Bangura and the assignment of experts to many peacekeeping operations, among others.

However, the phenomenon persists, as we have sadly seen in situations such as those in Syria, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In other words, the Council is acting, but, without denying the value of our proactive stance, we must recognize that our concrete impact on the ground continues to be relatively modest. The question we must ask, then, is what more can we do so that our decisions are translated into concrete action?

One promising approach lies in insisting more firmly that States make an ongoing priority of rule of law reform and strengthening their national institutions, including the civil and military justice systems, in order to address sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and to combat impunity for those that commit this type of crime. For that we unquestionably need political will, as we have heard, but we also need effective institutions. It is equally crucial to act on current situations where most of the victims of such crimes face a wall of impunity. We must act so that the truth comes out regarding the suffering of women and so that the perpetrators are held accountable for their acts. Acknowledging the truth and undertaking efforts aimed at achieving justice and promoting reconciliation are the minimum we should do to restore and re-establish the dignity of the victims.

Guatemala's own internal conflict was resolved over 15 years ago, but there still are hundreds of victims of sexual violence committed by various armed perpetrators. Happily, and as I have already indicated, preventing violence against women is a priority of the Guatemalan State today. We recently enacted a law against murder and other forms of violence against women, and one prohibiting sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking, which has enabled us to reform the codification of various crimes in the Guatemalan penal code. Furthermore, in a measure designed to improve the access of female victims of violence to justice, various programmes have been established in the executive and judicial branches to help eliminate impunity as it affects women. In that regard, our Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the Prosecutor and the courts, with technical and financial support from various United Nations agencies, have strengthened their capacity for prosecuting crimes related to violence against women.

As has been done in Guatemala, the issue of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations should be reflected in concrete decisions included in peace accords, especially in matters related to security and transitional justice. We support the Council's promotion of peace and reconciliation processes and agreements ending conflicts that address the issue explicitly and thus promote respect for the dignity of victims.

Finally, Guatemala strongly supports the elimination of obstacles to women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict situations. That was one of the subjects of presidential statement S/PRST/2012/23, issued under Guatemala's presidency of the Security Council in October. As part of the fight against impunity regarding sexual violence, that statement also included a firm condemnation of all acts against women and girls that violate international law on armed-conflict and post-conflict situations.

Before concluding, I would like to go off script to mention that my 13-year-old daughter Laura is with me in this Chamber. At 13 years of age I met a victim of sexual violence in conflict for the first time, a woman who was tortured and raped about 40 times. Subsequently, I have to say that I have witnessed such victims in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil and Colombia. We are thus discussing an issue that many Latin American women have suffered from. I would like to say here, before my 13-year-old daughter, that in the twenty-first century the world needs freedom and dignity for women and security for them in their lives, so that no young girl or adolescent can ever suffer sexual violence because of an armed conflict or any other circumstance.

In conclusion, we cannot sit by impassably in the face of any kind of sexual violence as a cause or result of armed conflict. We must combat it with every means at our disposal, not only by promoting awareness of its scale, scope and characteristics but also by taking specific actions to address it decisively.

Mrs. Vallaud-Belkacem (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate on sexual violence, which, as we understand it, is too often the tragic fate of women in conflict situations. I would also like to express our deep appreciation for the briefings by the Secretary-General, by Ms. Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, and by Ms. Jolie and Ms. Anywar.

We live in a world today where rape is used as a weapon of physical, psychological and social destruction, a world where in some places where women's bodies have become a real battleground. Such sexual violence committed in conflict should in no way be forgotten or go unpunished, and that is what we have come here to say today. The international community, of course, has been dealing with this question for some 10 years now, through the Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and succeeding resolutions, and that has led to commendable progress — condemning such violence unanimously, calling for the intensification of efforts aimed at better protecting women and, of course, at combating impunity, but also by establishing an important principle that I would like to recall here, that of women's equal participation in the reconciliation and reconstruction process. We must not forget that the best way of protecting those women is by making them stakeholders, rather than only subjects.

Significant progress has been made since then, above all political progress, due in particular to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. I would like once again to commend her commitment, as it has strengthened international awareness on the subject. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the zero-tolerance policy that has been set forth here against all forms of exploitation or sexual abuse attributed to United Nations staff, in particular forces deployed on the ground. That policy must continue with the same determination and firmness, because the United Nations must be nothing more than exemplary in that context.

There has also been judicial progress. The ad hoc tribunals established by the Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have gradually included sexual violence as crimes under their jurisdiction. The recognition of sexual violence, in particular rape, as a war crime, crime against humanity or possibly genocide represents a major step forward; it is an effective tool in the fight against impunity and a deterrent, which is exactly what we are seeking.

There has also been legislative progress, with the recent adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty as the first legally binding treaty to regulate arms transfers. It recognizes the link between the international arms trade and gender-based violence, which France has strongly supported. We very much hope that such analysis will continue to prevail in our future discussions.

Nevertheless, we are far from done with our work. The scale and intractable nature of sexual violence in current conflicts are intolerable. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the mobilization of the international community, sexual violence remains ubiquitous. Committed by all parties, it is carried out by the Mouvement du 23 mars and by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC). The Minova tragedy in South Kivu, where more than 130 women were raped in November 2012 by soldiers of the FARDC who were tasked with their protection, reminds us of that brutal reality. France will pursue its efforts to ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes and their commanders are prosecuted and punished.

I am extremely concerned by the humanitarian tragedy affecting Syrian women. Women have played a leading role in peaceful demonstrations; they have mobilized on the ground to rebuild a new Syria and to play an important role within the Syrian National Coalition. They represent a key element of the solution that we must urgently seek for the country.

It is known that the regime and its militias have used sexual violence to terrorize the population since the crisis began. Today, given the militarization and radicalization of the conflict, Syrian women are being silenced, whether in Syria itself, where they continue to be targeted by the Syrian regime, or in refugee camps, where forced marriages continue and their vulnerability is magnified.

We should like to see United Nations reports, particularly that of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the information conveyed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which contains tangible information on the crimes I have just described, to militate for a swift referral to the International Criminal Court. The perpetrators of those crimes must understand that they will be punished in a manner commensurate with their savagery. France also supports the principle of women's participation in terms of the Geneva II discussions on Syria.

In Mali, the President of the Republic has underscored that the French intervention was in fact also based on the need to defend the rights of female victims of violence. The deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the political process currently under way and the elections to come will, we hope, assist in re-establishing peace and stability in the country. However, the sexual violence committed by armed groups in the north in 2012 has traumatized Malian society. Justice must be pursued for all victims of sexual violence. They must be provided with psychological and legal assistance. The Malian authorities, with the support of the United Nations and the ICC, cannot avoid that issue.

In my opinion, and in conclusion, four actions must be continued in the fight against sexual violence. These four actions seek four goals, the so-called "four Ps" rule: preventing violence, protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators, and women's participation in the peace and reconstruction process.

Those four actions consist of, first, strengthening protection on the ground. Women's protection advisers play a key role. France wishes to see their deployment in peacekeeping and political missions extended beyond the missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Mali, and, above all, that they be provided with appropriate resources to carry out their work.

Secondly, there is a need to ensure victims' access to services, particularly sexual and reproductive health services. Young girls, adolescents and women victims of sexual violence can suffer, above and beyond psychological trauma, serious physical harm from violence. Adolescents and women are exposed to early, unwanted pregnancies. We must therefore fully consider all aspects of that reality.

Why do the sexual and reproductive rights of the victims of sexual violence continue to be contested? Restricting access to sexual and reproductive health care is an infringement of a woman's right to control her own body. Substantial progress was made in the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in forging consensus to affirm those rights at the global level. We must consolidate those achievements and ensure that victims of sexual violence have access to effective sexual and reproductive health care.

Thirdly, we must take to the fight against impunity with earnest; stigma and shame must switch sides so that the victims are no longer those who suffer the consequences of the crimes. That task falls above all to Governments, which have the responsibility to prosecute and punish. However, as has been said, if the State is unable to so act, the International Criminal Court, which is universal, must and should play its role.

Finally, the participation of women in conflict resolution efforts is, I believe, the only sustainable response. The international community's implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) must continue uninterrupted. Since its adoption, awareness of such results has increased, but is slow in having an impact on the ground. In Mali, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, the Sudan and Libya, women must fully contribute to their country's stabilization. I believe that no transition will be sustainable unless we take into consideration and ensure the participation of one half of humanity.

In that respect, national action plans on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) are a crucial instrument and must be broadened. As part of its plan of action, France , in partnership with UN-Women, has undertaken cooperation programmes aimed at combating violence against women in Africa and the Arab world. Recently, we allocated specific funds to programmes in Mali implemented by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in particular to support women's participation in political processes. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than €2 million have been earmarked since 2012 to support Congolese NGOs combating sexual violence and strengthening women's participation in decision-making processes. Along those lines, the President of France recently announced the convening of a summit on peace and security in Africa in Paris in December.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore that, in addition to the indescribable savagery of sexual violence that has been addressed here, it is also important to recall the tragic observation made recently by the World Health Organization that one in every three women worldwide has been subjected to domestic or sexual violence. No region has been spared from the violence. However it is true that, like ignorance, it behaves as an epidemic that can reach epidemic level in some countries. It is therefore absolutely crucial to continue to work unfailingly on all of those issues, because women's rights, like human rights, are universal and indivisible.

Mr. Amrani (Morocco): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your presence here today and for organizing this important debate. Your presence among us denotes a strong commitment to the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Ms. Zainab Bangura, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar, of the non-governmental organization Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, for their insightful briefings.

Sexual violence continues to destroy, scar and traumatize the lives of millions around the world, both victims and survivors, as well as families and communities. Regrettably, women and girls are the most affected by such deplorable acts.

Over the years, a number of tools and mechanisms have been developed to ensure that action is taken against the scourge of sexual violence in armed conflicts. The Security Council, through its growing focus on women and peace and security, has played an important role in establishing a solid framework to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. In that regard, civil society has also contributed to this noble goal and shed much-needed light on one of history's greatest silences. Yet more needs to be done.

Today we have a legal and moral responsibility to act collectively in order to prevent the recurrence of such crimes, to strengthen the repressive measures against perpetrators of these horrific acts and to ensure that they do not remain unpunished. My delegation would like to make the following five points.

First, the commitment of the national Governments concerned in the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict and their ownership of the process are crucial to preventing and putting an end to this phenomenon. That requires an innovative approach on our collective part, one that builds upon the gains achieved so far, enhances national ownership in the process and tackles the root causes of conflicts, namely, weak institutions, poverty, marginalization, social discrimination and exclusion, while ensuring adequate technical assistance and financial support to help States meet their commitments.

In that regard, Morocco recognizes the important role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and her team in increasing the international visibility of this important issue, and for the valuable support she brings to concerned countries and subregional and regional organizations.

It is crucial that the United Nations system and the international community continue to support and assist Member States, while fully respecting their sovereignty, in the elaboration of relevant national legislation, action plans and codes of conduct, as well as in the strengthening of their institutions and the rule of law.

Secondly, it is important to adopt a comprehensive approach in dealing with sexual violence in armed conflict. Success will be achieved only if the countries concerned are also able to address the root causes of this scourge. To that end, a coordinated approach is needed, not only at the national level but also at that of the United Nations, notably through strengthening national institutions in order to prevent conflicts. In that regard, we highly value the goals of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and recognize the need for its implementation.

Thirdly, the fight against impunity should be a priority. We need to break the existing cycle of violence and prevent the recurrence of such acts in armed conflict by ensuring that those responsible of committing crimes against women and children are brought to justice.

Fourthly, particular attention and priority should be given to the vulnerability of refugee populations, namely, women and children, living in the proximity of combat zones or unsecured borders or territories. Restriction of access to vulnerable groups, including women and girls, who often have no registration documents, poses major risks to the efforts of the United Nations in the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict. It is important that all parties ensure that there is access to refugee camps in order to reduce their suffering, promote their rights and ensure their optimal protection.

Lastly, the involvement of public authorities, national institutions for human rights, civil society and non-governmental organizations, including local women's associations, in raising awareness to enhance the protection of women in conflict situations, as well as the involvement of the donor community, should be encouraged, as they make a positive contribution to our common endeavour.

Finally, I cannot conclude without thanking the delegation of the United States for introducing the resolution on this important issue. I also commend the constructive spirit of compromise that made it possible for us to adopt it today.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): Let me join others in thanking you, The Right Honourable William Hague, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and President of the Security Council, for convening this open debate. I would also like to convey my sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for their respective statements. In addition, please allow me to acknowledge the presence here today of the Ministers of Guatemala, France, Morocco, Sweden, Ecuador and Lithuania, as well as that of our special guests, namely, Ms. Jane Adong Anywar, from the non-governmental organization Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, and Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In recent months, the Security Council has quite rightly directed considerable energy to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Today's open debate on sexual violence in conflict follows a similar open debate under Rwanda's presidency in April (see S/PV.6948), and one month after the Arria Formula meeting on gender advisers in peacekeeping missions, organized by Australia and Guatemala. Although we can never do enough to protect women and girls — in families, in villages, across communities and at national and international levels — we hope that debates such as these, supported by the eager participation of many States Members of the United Nations, will translate into concrete action, and that by taking action to protect women and girls from violence their key role in our respective societies will be promoted.

The commitment of the United Kingdom to raise awareness on war-zone rape and on the need to bring perpetrators to justice is commendable. In London in May 2012, you, Secretary Hague, launched a campaign in London to prevent rape and sexual violence in conflict zones. Last March, you visited our region: first Rwanda, where you paid tribute to the victims of the genocide perpetrated against Tutsis, and discussed lasting peace in the region. Then you visited the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where sexual and gender-based violence, tragically, remain prevalent, and reached out in order to hear from the victims of such violence. Last April, with your leadership, the Foreign Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of Eight adopted a declaration on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, which urged every State to bring the perpetrators to justice. Rwanda commends your leadership on the issue, Sir, and stands firmly beside you as we pursue a meaningful international response.

During the 1994 genocide perpetrated against Tutsis, women and girls were forced to endure inhuman and degrading atrocities. That memory and history inspire Rwanda in our unyielding and heartfelt commitment to eradicate sexual violence as a weapon of war and genocide. Tens of thousands of Rwandan women and young girls were raped and left for dead during the months of April to July 1994. Among those who survived, many were infected with incurable diseases, some were made pregnant, and many suffered the humiliation of having been abused in front of their families. It is deeply regrettable that many of those who committed those atrocities in Rwanda continue such practices in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today, with total impunity.

We take this opportunity to call upon all Member States, particularly those within the region, to fully implement resolution 1804 (2008) and to refrain from providing any military, financial or political support to the cynically called Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda.

Rwanda has been able to achieve meaningful reconciliation within our borders only by insisting on justice and fighting impunity. Rwandans have come to understand first-hand the importance of strengthening internal justice mechanisms and building institutions that enhance accessibility to justice. Fighting against impunity must be the primary responsibility of States. The international community, including the United Nations, should support national jurisdictions, by helping to build capacity where gaps exist and by providing guidance and direction drawn from a rich well of best practices in the field, including those gleaned from post-conflict societies such as Rwanda's.

For Rwanda's part, we have adopted a range of policies to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. One of the foremost priorities is to protect and rehabilitate the dignity of victims. That figures prominently in our national action plan on the implementation of the resolution 1325 (2000). To that end, sexual and gender-based violence centres were established at the community level throughout the country, and a 2009 law on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence includes penalties and substantive mechanisms to empower police to deal with such crimes.

In a recent trip to our region, the Secretary-General was joined by the President of the World Bank to launch a centre of excellence for the fight against violence against women and children. This is a best-practice one-stop centre and a place where all the relevant Government and non-Government support services — health, justice and police, counselling and welfare — converge to provide support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Such centres offer a non-threatening environment that allows victims to take full advantage of their legal rights, as well as to begin the process of healing. As noted by the Secretary-General during his visit, "Rwanda's strong political commitment to prevent and combat violence against women and children" is reflected in all spheres of the Government.

The Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) considers the prevention and mitigation of sexual violence against women and girls as a key imperative across all its deployments. The RDF gender desk devises training programmes to raise awareness of sexual and gender-based violence. Those programmes have been fully incorporated into the core curriculums of Rwanda's military academies and training institutions. That is considered integral to the preparation of all RDF battalions bound for peacekeeping missions abroad. Moreover, Rwanda is among the leading contributors of female police and correctional officers to United Nations peace-support and peacekeeping missions, where they combat and raise awareness about violence against women and serve as advisers on gender-based violence, sharing best practices with officers and local authorities.

For those reasons, we support the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and resolution 1960 (2010), which emphasize that all peacekeeping mandates incorporate provisions that specifically identify steps to address sexual violence, and that should include the clear identification of women's protection advisers alongside gender advisers and human rights protection units.

The legal and institutional framework against sexual and gender-based violence has been strengthened over time. However, as the recent report of the Secretary-General indicates (S/2013/335), sexual violence remains prevalent in armed conflict, particularly on the African continent. Ultimately, it is self-evident that the most effective means to eradicate sexual violence in conflict zones is to bring those conflicts to an end. Any comprehensive global response to the problem must acknowledge that sexual violence, while vile and unacceptable under any circumstances, is the by-product of war. Therefore, any meaningful solution must address the root causes of conflict. Furthermore, any global approach must include more effective monitoring of the commitments made by Member States to prevent sexual violence where possible and address its consequences where necessary.

Let me conclude by once again thanking non-governmental organizations, civil society and other non-State actors for their support to the cause of women and girls and for their contribution to justice against perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence. We hope and trust that their actions, combined with a genuine commitment by States as well as by the international community, will hasten the day when women, girls and children are no longer brutally targeted in conflicts that they did not at all create.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's debate and for the priority that the United Kingdom is devoting to combating sexual violence in conflict. I also appreciate the remarks and presence of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon this morning. I wish to thank Special Representative Bangura, Special Envoy Jolie and Ms. Adong Anywar for their briefings and leadership on this critical issue affecting international peace and security.

The United States welcomes this opportunity to reaffirm the indispensable role of women in bringing peace and security to countries embroiled in conflict or emerging from it. Women's active, indeed integral, involvement in peace processes and transitional justice mechanisms, including to address sexual violence, is critical to laying the foundation for lasting peace. The resolution that we have adopted today reinforces our collective efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence, hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes and provide support and justice to survivors. It also recognizes that national Governments have the primary responsibility for addressing the issue.

We see signs of progress as some national Governments are making justice systems more responsive and accessible to survivors of sexual violence. For example, Sierra Leon's new sexual offence law gives stiff minimum sentences to perpetrators. Sri Lanka's women's protection units provide female staff at police stations, and privacy for women to report crimes. In May, Somalia committed to ensuring the the protection of victims, witnesses, journalists and others who report on sexual violence — a necessity for strengthening legal cases and bringing those issues into the public sphere.

Special Representative Bangura deserves special thanks for her significant work with authorities to reduce sexual violence in Somalia, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We applaud and appreciate the critical role that civil society, especially local women's groups, plays in assisting survivors by providing them with medical care, counselling and a political voice, and by facilitating their access to justice. The United States is proud to support Congolese organizations that provide free legal aid for survivors, as well as training for provincial lawyers and mobile courts — courts that heard almost 3,000 cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo last year. The efforts of local civil society remain vital and deserve even greater support from national authorities and the international community.

We also commend international initiatives that bolster national capacity on the issue. The United Kingdom, and Foreign Secretary Hague in particular, deserves praise for leading the development by the Group of Eight of an international protocol on the investigation and documentation of rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict. Through efforts such as Justice Rapid Response, UN-Women and other entities have provided valuable technical support for promoting accountability by helping to document evidence for judicial processes. And the Security Council has adopted targeted sanctions against those who commit, command or condone sexual violence in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We strongly encourage United Nations Sanctions Committees to expand their use of that tool to fight impunity.

We have indeed made strides in addressing sexual violence in conflict, but there is still a long way to go. More countries should criminalize conflict-related sexual violence. Provisions that prohibit amnesty for perpetrators must be put into ceasefire and mediation agreements. And it is imperative that the international community and senior United Nations officials, at Headquarters and in the field, support the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The Security Council must continue to treat this threat to international peace and security with the utmost gravity. Sexual violence in conflict cannot and must not be viewed narrowly as just a women's issue, since it remains a horrific weapon of war that destroys individuals, devastates communities and even destabilizes countries. Above all, let us remember that sexual violence is not cultural, it is criminal.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank the United Kingdom for convening this open debate on women and peace and security and for submitting a concept note on the topic (S/2013/335, annex). I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the representative of the non-governmental organization Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, for their extensive statements.

Azerbaijan welcomes the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) on sexual violence at today's meeting and believes that it will further advance the issue. Civilians continue to suffer from inadequate protection in situations of armed conflict, including discriminatory treatment, torture, sexual violence, extrajudicial executions, mass population displacement and ethnic cleansing. In many situations of armed conflict, sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war to terrorize and force displacement. The increasing attention of the Security Council and the wider international community to the issue has led to the development of a solid normative framework and to raising awareness about the impact of sexual violence on its victims, their families and societies.

It is imperative that all parties to armed conflict strictly abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. Azerbaijan reiterates its strong condemnation of all acts of sexual violence in conflict. There can be no tolerance for such acts, and all the necessary measures must be taken to end impunity. Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, and national courts are the principal venues for holding individuals accountable for crimes of sexual violence. At the same time, inadequate national capacity and expertise for investigating and prosecuting acts of sexual violence remains one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability. In that regard, we note the efforts of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009), to strengthen the capacity of national rule-of-law and justice actors. However, when national authorities fail to take action, the international community should play a more proactive role in ensuring an appropriate response.

Unfortunately, not all grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including acts of sexual violence, receive sufficient attention and response at the international and regional levels. More resolute and targeted measures are therefore required to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice; such measures and appropriate protection efforts must obviously be free of selectivity and politically motivated approaches and preferences.

It is essential to establish the truth with respect to gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including sexual violence in conflict, and to provide adequate and effective reparations. It is also important to ensure that such reparations are established through judicial or administrative mechanisms and made available to victims. Furthermore, past wrongs that have been left unpunished or unrecognized may impede progress in achieving long-awaited peace and reconciliation, and can also play a key role in the eruption of new conflicts and the commission of new crimes. It is also essential to address sexual violence in conflict through all available means, including by mandating international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, as well as by supporting the implementation of their recommendations.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our support for more systematic and frequent discussions of this topic and to once again commend the United Kingdom for convening this open debate.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to say that I am delighted that this open debate is being held. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and your Foreign Secretary, as well as the representatives of the various countries here today. I also welcome the participation of the Secretary-General, and I am grateful for the statements made by Ms. Zainab Bangura, Ms. Angelina Jolie and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar.

I would like here to mention the feminist movement, to pay tribute to it and to the thousands of women who risk their lives on a daily basis to defend women's human rights and put an end to impunity.

I would like to recall here the principles of the United Nations initiative to combat sexual violence against women in conflict situations. Rape is not an inevitable consequence of war. Gender violence, including sexual violence, is a violation of women's dignity and fundamental human rights. Attempts to halt and respond to sexual violence must address gender inequalities and contribute to women's empowerment. Women are often leaders in the process of eliminating sexual violence and ensuring peace; the constructive participation of men and boys in it is vital to the prevention of sexual violence in conflict situations. Best practices against sexual violence must be strengthened. Sexual violence in conflict situations and impunity for those who commit such crimes have been met with a deafening silence. We all have a duty to act.

We know that during the course of history the definition of human rights and recognition of their universality did not evolve at the same time. Only a little more than 20 years ago, and at several world summits, was a definition developed — not without resistance and friction — of women's rights as human rights. Only recently, in 1993, was the legal existence of women as subjects of law recognized.

It was at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, that it was recognized that the rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable part of universal human rights. It was stated there that the situation of women in the world must be analysed from the gender perspective in order to ensure that the universality of human rights shall encompass the specific situations that prevent us, as women, from fully exercising our human rights.

Six years later, the focus on the human rights approach and the gender perspective was to imbue the most important instrument of international criminal law: the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Based on that significant progress, violence against women is now recognized as a human rights violation in that it flouts a series of rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life; the right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; the right to equality before the law; the right to equality in the family; and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, inter alia.

Part of the process of recognizing that violence against women is a violation of human rights involves stepping back from views that hold that violence against women represents a kind of cultural expression or is the unquestionable prerogative of specific groups or individuals in the context of the exercise of power.

We know that violence against women is woven into the social fabric and pervades not only judicial systems but also the way in which we see the world and relationships between human beings in time of peace and in time of armed conflict.

In armed conflict, then, appalling violence against women, mass rape, abduction and sexual slavery must not be regarded as exceptions but, rather, as a savage extension of the daily violence against women. Indeed, violence against women is not a horrifying exception; it is, rather, a continuum of violence. Thus, we note that perhaps because of this, although such violence is repugnant and illegal, it is in cases of sexual violence that we see the lowest level of protection and the highest rate of failure on the part of States to implement their unshirkable responsibility to respect and guarantee the human rights of women.

Such vulnerability is particularly acute in the field of criminal procedural law, where a perverse cycle of victimization of women occurs. In cases of sexual violence, victims are routinely interrogated about their participation in the crime; they are exposed to unacceptable standards of proof; their lives are investigated and assessed; their testimony is minimized or rejected; and their claims are silenced. Today, gender discrimination has reached the level of juris et de jure presumptions of law, with real and discriminatory effects.

In the context of armed conflict, violence against women has particular significance. The worst crimes are committed in times of war, which exacerbates the inequality of women. Thus rape is a message of castration and mutilation of the enemy, a battle fought among men but carried out on the bodies of women.

We all know that one of the elements used to legitimize such acts has been the concept of the sexual honour of women as being the basis of male honour. Hence sexual violence against women, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy become acts that are justifiable in time of armed conflict, on the basis of the argument that they meet the needs of men. Faced with this horrifying reality, we as women are throughout the world turning our sorrow into strength to demand that our human rights be respected and that an end be put to impunity.

As we move along the road to equality, a key milestone has been the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. There, for the first time, it was recognized in the framework of international humanitarian law that rape and other forms of sexual and gender violence are crimes as serious as genocide, torture, cruel treatment, mutilation and slavery.

That was also a turning point in the context of impunity — against impunity in law, which has its origins in norms such as amnesties, and impunity in act, which runs the gamut from complicity on the part of public power, to the passivity of investigators, to selectivity or corruption on the part of the judiciary.

Those important advances are without a doubt the result of the jurisprudence of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the statements condemning sexual violence against women made at Beijing and Vienna, and the active participation of the women's movement.

Those beliefs are reflected in my country's decision to combat impunity by exercising the unshirkable duty of States to fight impunity. We have done this not only with respect to criminal prosecution for the crimes against humanity committed by the civil-military dictatorship, using State terrorism, with 413 people already found guilty.

We also recently signed the Arms Trade Treaty, after having worked together with many present here, fighting hard to ensure that for the first time the link between the international arms trade and gender violence could be recognized. The President of my country has signed a decree regarding the implementation of our national plan of action on resolution 1325 (2000) and complementary measures. Men and women participating in peacekeeping missions are given training on gender perspectives and human rights. The strengthening of gender focal points in Blue Helmets is also a priority.

In the negotiations leading to the adoption today of resolution 2106 (2013), we held intensive discussions on the tensions that may occur between the protection of human rights and the principle of State sovereignty, both fundamental pillars of the system of international relations arising from the Charter of our Organization.

However, just as human rights cannot be degraded to be used as a Trojan horse for foreign interventionism in the domestic affairs of a country, neither can sovereignty be invoked to cast a veil over serious human rights violations or to protect from impunity in a particular location. Argentina thus voted in favour of the resolution, in the belief that it respects the sovereignty of States and protects human rights, particularly those of women. As our dear friend Zainab Bangura has said, eradicating sexual violence in armed conflict is not a mission impossible.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I wish to express my appreciation, Mr. President, for the United Kingdom's leadership and for Foreign Secretary Hague's own personal drive to bring more serious and systematic international focus to the issue of the prevention of sexual violence. I thank also the Secretary-General and Special Representative Bangura for their determined commitment, as well as Ms. Adong Anywar and all her colleagues for their inspirational work in the field, so often in the face of the corrosive violence of indifference, and Ms. Angelina Jolie for her uninhibited advocacy and reminder to the Council that so many millions of people rely on us.

We know that sexual violence is both a tactic and a consequence of conflict. It can prolong and deepen conflict. Its prevention is intrinsic to the protection of civilians in conflict, a primordial concern of the Council, and to rebuilding societies devastated by conflict. As successive resolutions of the Council make plain, sexual violence goes to the heart of the Council's mandate in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Despite the Council's clear stance against sexual violence in conflict, we also know about the terrible number of women and girls, men and boys, who continue to be affected by it every day. Sexual violence is not just a grave concern, it is even endemic in many current situations on the Council's daily agenda: the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan and Syria. In the face of such violence, the international community's strong expectation — it should be their demand — is that the Council will do more. The Council's open debate on 17 April (see S/PV.6948) addressed many of the most compelling issues that we should be dealing with. Today's resolution 2106 (2013) is a further step towards ensuring that sexual violence is addressed across the breadth of our work, but in a very practical, programmatic way. That includes the consistent application of targeted sanctions and eliciting and monitoring commitments from all parties to conflict.

Today I want to focus on the current culture of impunity. Changing that to one of accountability is fundamental to deterrence and prevention. We have recognized that sexual violence can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity; we have recognized that States have an obligation to investigate and prosecute such crimes; and we have recognized that ending impunity is a critical part of achieving lasting peace. But the fact remains that we have seen only a tiny number of perpetrators brought to justice. That sends the dangerous message that sexual violence is still tolerated. As Special Representative Bangura said this morning, "Today it is still largely cost-free to rape a woman, child or man in conflict".

States have the primary obligation to investigate and prosecute crimes of sexual violence. That requires that they criminalize each recognized crime — rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity. It is not sufficient to just have those crimes on the books. Female victims of sexual violence must be provided with equal access to justice, which requires substantive rights to be recognized and women and girls to be encouraged to exercise those rights. Measures must be adopted to encourage victims and witnesses to testify against perpetrators and to protect those who do so.

National capacity must be developed to translate substantive laws into successful investigations and prosecutions. In that context, we commend the work being done by the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Kingdom's own team of experts, Justice Rapid

Response and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations, among others. The Australian Civilian Corps is strengthening its own gender-based violence expertise to complement these efforts.

Obviously, even the most sophisticated criminal justice systems will be of little use if the political will to investigate and prosecute perpetrators is lacking. National authorities must fight stigmas that impede the reporting of incidents of sexual violence to law enforcement authorities. Investigators must be trained to look for evidence of crimes of sexual violence and to gather the evidence necessary to sustain prosecutions. Crimes of sexual violence, like other serious international crimes, must be excluded from amnesty provisions. States should also consider complementary processes, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, to supplement criminal accountability processes. Where national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to prosecute crimes of sexual violence, the Council should consider International Criminal Court (ICC) referral, and ensure that the Council supports subsequent ICC activities. We commend the ICC on its leadership in seeking to ensure that crimes of sexual violence are not neglected in the fight against impunity.

In conclusion, we have focused today on the victims of sexual violence, who are overwhelmingly female. But women are not just victims. They are critical agents in conflict prevention, resolution, rebuilding and reconciliation. Just as we must ensure women's full and effective participation in efforts to address sexual violence through both prevention and protection, we must also to utilize their decisive power to bring about peace. That is fundamental to the Council's work

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Foreign Secretary Hague and I am grateful for his coming to New York to preside over today's meeting. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their briefings. I have listened carefully to the statement by Ms. Anywar.

Women are a major force for peace, stability and development in society. The promotion of gender equality and women's rights represents a true reflection of human civilization and progress, and is also closely related to peace and world development. In situations of armed conflict, however, sexual violence against women is employed by parties to conflict as a means of war more often than not. Vulnerable groups, including women, bear the brunt of conflict in many situations. Sexual violence against women and their sexual enslavement in armed conflict are not only grave violations of women's rights but also a flagrant challenge to the human conscience and social justice.

It is no surprise that such acts have been unanimously condemned and opposed by the international community. China strongly condemns all violence against civilians in armed conflict, and is resolutely opposed to using sexual violence as a means of war, as well as to any acts of sexual violence or sexual enslavement against women. We call for the full implementation of the Council's relevant resolutions and urge all parties to conflict to abide by international law and international humanitarian law, and to cease all acts of violence against women immediately. I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, combating sexual violence in conflict must be done with full respect for national sovereignty, and should rely primarily on national efforts. National Governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting women's rights in their country; it is they, first and foremost, that should carry out the task of implementing the Council's resolutions and fighting sexual violence in conflict. In assisting the countries concerned, the international community, including the United Nations, must fully respect their sovereignty; it is important to respect their will and the programmes drawn up by national Governments based on their own conditions. It is important to strengthen coordination with the Governments concerned, provide constructive help and avoid imposing from outside.

Secondly, the Security Council has an active role to play in fighting sexual violence in armed conflict, in the light of its own mandate and strengths. However, it is different from the Human Rights Council and it is also different from the Commission on the Status of Women. When addressing sexual violence, the Council must not encroach upon the responsibilities of other United Nations bodies. It must effectively implement its primary responsibility, that of maintaining international peace and security, and its efforts must focus on conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction, thereby creating a legal, political and security environment conducive to addressing sexual violence in armed conflict and to protecting women's rights. The various organs of the United Nations must follow their own mandates and respect the division of labour, making every attempt to avoid any overlap of efforts.

Thirdly, attention must be paid to the issues underlying the protection of women's security and curbing sexual violence in armed conflict. It is important to address issues of women's rights at a deeper level, in order to promote women's full development and eliminate the root causes of conflict. Attention should also be given to improving the economic and social development of the countries concerned, in order to enhance women's status and fully empower them. The international community must increase its attention to the development of women in those countries and scale up its aid in that area. It should support capacity-building for the Governments concerned and ensure that assistance to women's development is increased in their countries so as to effectively enhance women's status and protect their rights.

China took an active part in the consultations on drafting today's resolution on sexual violence in armed conflict (resolution 2106 (2013)), and has just voted in favour of it. We believe that the Special Representatives and United Nations missions should implement it in strict observance of the Council's mandate.

China is ready to continue to play, with the international community, an active role in fighting sexual violence in armed conflict.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank the United Kingdom leadership for convening this meeting. I appreciate the presence here today of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. William Hague. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Bangura, for their informative briefings, as well as to Ms. Angelina Jolie and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar for their powerful and moving statements.

Rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence in conflict are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law and can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and constitutive acts of genocide. Ensuring accountability for those responsible is crucial to eradicating conflict-related sexual violence. However, it is a disturbing historical fact that, in many cases, national and international justice systems have failed to bring perpetrators of such sexual violence to justice. Against that backdrop, my delegation would like to commend the leadership of the United Kingdom in addressing the issue.

We welcome the declaration of the Group of Eight (G-8) on preventing sexual violence in conflict, adopted in April under the United Kingdom presidency of the G-8. As the declaration recognizes, sexual violence represents one of the most serious forms of violation or abuse of international humanitarian law and human rights law, and there should be no safe haven for perpetrators of such crimes.

I would like to underline the following three points. First, we underscore the importance of accountability at the national level. States bear the primary responsibility to protect women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and bring those responsible to justice. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the stress placed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on national ownership, leadership and responsibility in combating sexual violence as one of her priorities. All States should include the full range of acts of sexual violence in national penal legislation and ensure the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for violations through proper legal and policy frameworks.

We believe that political will is crucial. The lack of adequate national capacity to investigate and prosecute sexual violence may also be one of the main challenges to ensuring accountability for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence. We welcome the fact that the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict has been focusing its efforts on strengthening the capacity of national rule of law and justice actors.

The long-term prevention of sexual violence is equally important. We also commend UN-Women for its increasing contribution to the promotion of gender equality and women's political, social and economic empowerment, as well as their participation in every sector of society.

Secondly, we would like to stress the significance of the international justice mechanism. When national justice systems are unwilling or unable to fulfil their responsibilities, international mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as the ad hoc and mixed tribunals, should play the role of ensuring accountability. The fact that charges of sexual violence are included in nearly every case of investigation and prosecution indicates both the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence and the significant role of the ICC in holding perpetrators of those crimes accountable.

The Security Council should play its role by referring serious sexual violence to the ICC and by adopting targeted and graduated measures of relevant sanctions committees. Furthermore, the Security Council needs to systematically reflect sexual violence in conflict in all relevant country resolutions and ensure the inclusion of specific language on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, including the accelerated and extended deployment of women's protection advisers in all peacekeeping and political mission mandates.

Thirdly, fighting impunity and ensuring accountability should be given critical importance in ceasefire and post-conflict reconstruction processes. Ending impunity is crucial if a society recovering from conflict is to come to terms with the past and to prevent future abuses. Sexual violence should be included in the definition of acts prohibited by ceasefires and in provisions for ceasefire monitoring. Furthermore, crimes of sexual violence need to be excluded from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes.

In that context, my delegation would like to stress that delivering justice for victims of sexual violence is not just about holding perpetrators accountable, but also ensures reparative justice. We fully support the recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) that reparations awarded through judicial or administrative mechanisms be established and made available to victims of sexual violence in conflict.

My delegation welcomes resolution 2106 (2013) adopted today, and commends the leadership of the United States delegation for effectively steering the negotiation process. We believe that the resolution will mark another significant milestone in our difficult but victorious journey towards ending sexual violence and the culture of impunity the world over.

Before closing, my delegation would like to commend the excellent work of Special Representative Bangura and extend its full support to her in fulfilling her mandate. The Republic of Korea will remain committed to fighting conflict-related sexual violence, in cooperation with the international community.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank you, Sir, for having organized this important open debate on sexual violence in armed conflict. Its focus on the fight against impunity and on the crucial need to ensure justice for survivors is, in our opinion, particularly appropriate.

I also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his statement, and Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura for her remarkable work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Finally, I welcome the contribution of Ms. Jane Adong Anywar, of the NGO Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, and Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

My delegation fully aligns with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

It is important that the Council reiterate today its most firm condemnation of sexual violence. That abject and cowardly war tactic ruins the lives of hundreds of thousands of women and girls, as well as of many men and boys, who become not only the powerless witnesses of the harm inflicted on their spouses, mothers, daughters and sisters, but also, with greater frequency, direct victims of sexual violence.

Sexual violence in armed conflict is indisputably a subject directly linked to international peace and security, as underscored in resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), and today's resolution 2106 (2013). The fight against sexual violence in conflict is complex undertaking requiring various levels of action, including combating impunity, which is especially important.

Both restorative and punitive, justice can play a prevention role in terms of future conflict by deterring potential perpetrators from committing crimes. By the same token, justice must enable victims to gain recognition for wrongs they have experienced, and thereby facilitate the process of remembrance and reparation, eventually leading to reconciliation and peacebuilding. As the representative of a victims organization in Guinea once said, "before turning the page, we must read the page". Unfortunately, at present the vast majority of victims are deprived of this basic right and the vast majority of the perpetrators of these crimes do not answer for their actions. That is inacceptable.

We all know that regardless of cultures and backgrounds, cases of sexual violence are not always reported, either because the survivors fear being ostracized or because they fear for their lives or those of their relatives, or for both reasons at once. We must therefore make every effort to ensure protection for victims. It is also important to protect the human rights advocates who struggle daily to make the survivors heard. A crime that is not denounced and documented is a crime that can never be prosecuted and will never be the subject of reparations.

National courts are primarily responsible for prosecuting and trying the perpetrators of sexual violence associated with armed conflict. States must likewise assume their responsibilities by taking the steps necessary to incorporate into their national legislation provisions criminalizing sexual violence and excluding amnesty laws for the most serious crimes, including sexual violence. The international community, for its part, must continue to support national authorities in their efforts to fight impunity. At the United Nations, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict can play a particularly useful supporting role in this regard.

But we must be clear — whatever the reason, many countries in post-conflict situations do not have and will not have in the medium term a legal system capable of judging, with all the guarantees of fair justice, the perpetrators of these crimes. In such circumstances, under the principle of complementarity, international criminal justice must fulfil its supplementary role.

My delegation applauds the efforts made in this regard by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The actions and proceedings before the ICC have clearly helped to strengthen the fight against impunity. I recall in this context that the issue of a second arrest warrant against General Bosco Ntaganda includes counts of crimes against humanity, rape and sexual slavery. Bosco Ntaganda is now in The Hague being tried for his crimes, thanks to the cooperation of Member States that have contributed to his transfer to the ICC. This is critical matter, and I reiterate the call on States to cooperate with the Court in accordance with their respective obligations.

Finally, in the fight against impunity and to end sexual violence related to conflict. it is important for the Council to continue to discharge its responsibilities, provide concrete follow-up to its decisions, adopt, if necessary, targeted measures to increase the pressure on perpetrators, and systematically inscribe the alleged perpetrators of sexual violence on sanctions committee lists, taking into account the information provided by the Special Representative in this regard. Resolution 2106 (2013), which we have just adopted, is important in that repsect, and Luxembourg is proud to be a sponsor. It sends a clear signal to all parties who commit sexual violence that the Security Council will not relax its attention to these acts. Impunity will not prevail.

Mr. Kadangha-Bariki (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I want to thank your country, the United Kingdom, for having organized today's debate on the theme "Women and peace and security", especially sexual violence in armed conflict, and to welcome your presence among us to lead our work. I also welcome the Ministers of France, Guatemala and Morocco. Their presence in this debate reflects the interest that their countries attach to this alarming issue.

I also thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Bangura, Ms. Angelina Jolie and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar for their respective briefings.

I also thank the United States delegation for its leadership in the preparation and negotiation of resolution 2106 (2013), which we have just adopted.

Women and girls continue to be the victims of violence of all kinds during and after armed conflict, despite all the efforts being made to prevent it. The emergence of new armed groups in old conflicts, such as those in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, and the emergence of new conflicts, such as those in Mali and Syria, have undoubtedly increased the number of women and girl victims of sexual violence. These armed groups, with their generally undisciplined fighters, engage in countless acts of violence that constitute crimes under international law. We cannot exonerate national armed forces from such human rights violations, since they too harbour so-called rogue elements who commit the same abuses as those committed by armed rebel groups, particularly rape, which has now become a tactic common to all belligerents.

As we noted in our statement on this issue in April under the Rwandan presidency (see S/PV.6948), the main underlying causes of the violence include poverty, poor governance, the democratic deficit, revenge and the desire for racial domination and to impose one's culture or religion. This reality is common to all countries in conflict, and such problems should be taken into account by all Governments while their countries enjoy peace and stability.

There can be no doubt that atrocities against women and girls will continue to be committed if their authors have no fear of being caught and if aggressors are not prosecuted and punshed. We believe that verbal condemnations and promises to act are no longer enough. We must go further by seeking to further educate not only military and Government leaders, but also rebel movements. Raising awareness among the commanders of these forces on the protection of civilians, respect for international legal instruments, humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as the effective implementation of relevant agreements, should be favored and supported.

Peace missions are already working in these areas, and we thank them for it. However, we believe that capacity-building would contribute further towards that goal. We stress and welcome the particular role of women's protection advisers and gender advisers in peacekeeping operations, as was highlighted at the Arria formula meeting of 17 May organized by Australia and Guatemala under the Togolese presidency of the Security Council. These advisers should be present in all peace missions.

We must address the issue of impunity through the adoption of strict provisions. In this regard, the United Nations should assist States in developing or establishing mechanisms of cooperation through bilateral or regional agreements for the arrest and extradition of alleged perpetrators of violence against women and girls. and by strengthening the capacity of national courts, whose weaknesses with respect to this issue tend to perpetuate the violence.

However, we believe that if the fight against impunity is to succeed, we must establish effective cooperation between national and international courts, and between them and States, including in the enforcement of arrest warrants and other decisions. All too often, unfortunately, we note a lack of political will in that regard. We must remember that every State must try and prosecute the perpetrators of serious human rights violations on its territory. States must cooperate to that end.

Women and girls are the primary victims of violations of their fundamental human rights in armed conflict. They must therefore be part of the solution. As the French representative has pointed out, they must be stakeholders and not passive subjects. It is therefore important to involve them in every mediation and peacebuilding process in the aftermath of conflict. We welcome the Security Council's commitment to ensuring the greater involvement and higher numbers of women in peacekeeping operations so that they can play a significant role in victim protection.

Despite all the difficulties and the need to ensure the protection of women and girls in armed conflict and to prosecute their attackers, there is still the hope that combating such violence will succeed thanks to the commitment and efforts of the international community. We wish to commend the efforts of UN-Women, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and many international and non-governmental organizations to that end. However, their advocacy must include a plea for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty, because its implementation by all States, particularly those where weapons are manufactured, could make a big contribution to ending the sale and illegal trafficking of arms in countries in conflict. Such weapons fuel conflict and violence, particularly against women and girls.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we thank the Secretary-General and the briefers who have been invited to the Council for their statements and useful information on combating sexual violence in armed conflict.

The Security Council, over the past five years, has repeatedly considered the topic of sexual violence in armed conflict. The Russian stance was fully laid out during a similar Security Council open debate in April this year (see S/PV6948), under the Rwandan presidency. For that reason, today we would like to simply touch on some key points.

The diverse nature of violence in armed conflict requires us to pay particular attention to all of its manifestations. We should base our consideration of the issue of women, peace and security on a comprehensive approach, as stipulated in resolution 1325 (2000). Sexual violence is one such manifestation of cause, warranting firm condemnation and harsh punishment. Painstaking investigations of all cases and punishment for the perpetrators are the keys to success in combating that heinous practice.

We believe that attempts to expand the interpretation of the relevant scope pertaining to armed conflict and post-conflict situations that has been agreed in intergovernmental processes and laid down in resolutions of the Security Council are unjustified. We consider that such an approach could have a negative impact not only on the work of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole, but also and more practically on the effectiveness of combating sexual violence.

It is important for all structures involved in the matter to avoid excessive bureaucracy, which replaces the real fight against sexual violence in armed conflict. We consider that it is not possible to combat sexual violence in armed conflict without the active involvement of national authorities in the process. The work of the representatives of the United Nations system on the ground and cooperation between United Nations missions and country teams and non-State armed groups should be carried out with the consent of and in close cooperation with the Governments of the affected States. They should also be consulted on providing assistance or services.

It is important that the primary responsibility in protecting civilians in their territory be borne by Governments. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States is a fundamental and indivisible principle of the United Nations work. These principles will be vigorously upheld when they can foster the development of effective international cooperation in combating sexual violence.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank the United Kingdom Secretary of State of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. Hague, for presiding over today's debate and the Ministers of Guatemala, France and Morocco for their statements.

We deeply appreciate the Secretary-General's special briefing today, his leadership on combating sexual violence in armed conflict and his recent visits to meet the victims of sexual violence. Special Representative Zainab Bangura has, in a short span of time, injected a sense of urgency for intensified action. We pay a tribute to her for her passion and hard work. Ms. Angelina Jolie's personal commitment and strong advocacy of women's rights have produced results.

The United Kingdom delegation's succinct concept note (S/2013/335, annex) has guided our preparations for this debate. We especially applaud the leadership role of the United States in the Security Council on women, peace and security. We thank the United States delegation for working skilfully and inclusively to forge consensus on resolution 2106 (2013), adopted today.

As the briefers have substantiated once again today, the vile crime of sexual violence in armed conflict is a growing phenomenon. Women, girls, men and boys are all targeted, but women bear the brunt of sexual atrocities in wars and armed conflicts. They are harassed, molested, raped, maimed and disabled. Other forms of violence — sexual slavery, commercial sexual exploitation, forced pregnancies and enforced sterilization — are rampant. Such violence assaults human dignity, ruins the lives of survivors and their families, and subjects communities and societies to torture and trauma. Sexual violence in armed conflicts is used to force the displacement of populations, illegally acquire natural resources, eliminate political opponents and punish ethnic and religious groups.

Security Council resolutions over the years have established that systematic sexual violence, used as an instrument of war, is a grave threat to international peace and security. By now, we have developed a strong normative and institutional framework to fight that scourge. The erroneous thesis that sexual violence in armed conflict is a cultural phenomenon has been rejected. Yet, we know that the implementation of decisions has been slow and monitoring indifferent. Those who commit, command and condone sexual violence still, by and large, act with impunity.

Resolution 2106 (21303), adopted today, will have an impact on implementation as it translates the Secretary-General's recommendations into concrete decisions. The Security Council, by today's resolution, calls for targeted sanctions against perpetrators. It equips different bodies and entities with tools to oppose impunity, empowers women to seek redress, strengthens international political response and fosters national ownership. The Council's call for the immediate cessation of acts of sexual violence and implementation of time-bound commitments should be heeded by all parties to armed conflicts. Those calls are not abstract. They should resonate to real life situations in the Syria Arab Republic, Guinea-Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and other armed conflicts.

It is important that measures against sexual violence be made an integral part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes. Before these exercises are started, mechanisms should be put in place for women's protection. More women should sit at the table where decisions are made on peace and ceasefire accords, peacekeeping, stabilization and reconstruction. As the French Minister said so aptly, women should be stakeholders, not subjects.

It is imperative to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries, Pakistan can testify that the appointment of gender advisers in the field has been very useful. Adequate resources should be allocated for that purpose. Pakistani women peacekeepers have served as police officers, doctors and nurses in missions in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. We have made gender sensitization a mandatory part of the training of our peacekeepers.

To conclude, I emphasize that we should also devote energies to addressing the root causes of conflicts. While the Council takes punitive measures against perpetrators, its efforts are strengthened by the voice of the global citizens who help us nurture a culture of zero tolerance of unconscionable acts of sexual violence. In this context, the perspective of Ms. Jane Adong Anywar of NGO Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice is important and directly relevant to our work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Sir, for having convened this open debate. At the same time, I would like to reiterate the position of Ecuador that the Security Council, in recognition of the value of keeping the discussion of the serious topic before us today alive, must constrain its actions in keeping with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations in this as in all contexts — that is to say, with respect to matters posing a threat international peace and security.

The Ecuadorian Constitution defines our country as a territory of peace. Likewise, as a member of the Union of South American Nations, we have set out to build a region of peace where the peaceful resolution of disputes is promoted. We believe that this approach is fundamental to avoiding conflict. We understand that peace is not simply the absence of war, but that it requires us to work to eradicate poverty and inequality at the national and international levels. We must recognize that armed conflicts often arise in contexts of inequality between States resulting from an unjust international economic system and various forms of social exclusion and ethnic, religious and gender-based intolerance, which are determining factors at the root of armed conflicts and acts of violence. We must therefore call on States to avoid wars of aggression and the use of force against supposed threats and to respect the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples.

The current situation of conflicts around the world is extremely worrying. In this scenario, where the inequalities among States manifest themselves in asymmetric struggles in which those who control resources impose their force and will, the environment of conflict is influencing economic dynamics. Countries in crisis resort to the arms trade to strengthen their real economies. This leads us to wonder what has happened to the sense of global ethics. Nothing harms human rights more than fueling the economy with weapons.

Global military spending in 2012 totaled $1.753 trillion, which is more than 2.5 per cent of global gross domestic product. The five countries with the highest military expenditure together represent more than four-fifths of total global military expenditure.

As we address the problem of sexual violence in conflict against this backdrop, it must be borne in mind that there exist social conventions whereby violence against women is permitted and has, unfortunately, come to seem normal and commonplace. Rapes committed during conflict are intended to terrorize, break families and communities apart, and transmit infections, and, at times, change the ethnic composition of populations. However, beyond the motivations for the use of such acts as weapons of war, they also contribute to the possession and control of women as pawns of war.

Sexual violence is a violation of fundamental human rights, and of the human rights and dignity of women in particular. Efforts to use international humanitarian law and international criminal law to protect women from sexual violence must be redoubled.

All States are responsible not only for ending such violence but also for ending impunity for war crimes, including those related to sexual violence. In Ecuador, the Constitution recognizes the right of people to live free from all forms of violence. Our Constitution also designates the armed forces as an institution to protect the rights, freedoms and guarantees of citizens, and that members of the armed forces may be judged only by the legal system, which is why the Military Justice Court was abolished in 2008. This reflects the determination of the State to ensure the impartiality of judges and to prevent impunity.

In keeping with these constitutional foundations, reforms to the penal code were introduced in 2010, and a chapter was included on crimes against people and goods protected by international humanitarian law, incorporating the crimes covered by the Rome Statute and providing for the severe punishment with extended prison sentences of 16 to 25 years for any military personnel who commit acts of a sexual or reproductive nature, including rape, against protected persons during an armed conflict.

It is crucial to bear in mind that the participation of women on an equal footing with men is indispensible for achieving peace. The State of Ecuador has incorporated the gender perspective into its National Plan for Good Living, but also has a national plan for the eradication of gender-based violence, which was established as State policy in 2007. The Ministry of National Defence promotes the concept of defence as a public good, and a gender approach is therefore incorporated into defence policy. Human rights are seen as an area for action in policy implementation, including through the promotion of policies of gender equality, coexistence and respect for cultural identity and the effective implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009).

In March this year, we established the Ecuadorian Armed Forces Gender Policy, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, especially non-discrimination against women. The Policy emphasizes the strategic political importance of the participation of women in the military sphere, with equal rights and opportunities. The Gender Policy promotes change in the cultural patterns that lead to gender-based violence, is incorporated into the education of military personnel, and promotes educational programmes on preventing sexual violence, in particular in training troops.

To measure the impact of the Gender Policy with indicators, the Ministry of Defence has a computerized system for monitoring human rights, gender equality and intercultural matters. This system allows us to link cases of suspected human rights violations and gender-based violence, serving as a useful tool for building respect for human rights and gender equality in the armed forces and for eradicating violence against individuals, communities, ethnic groups and nationalities.

We believe that if each State establishes a national framework, international ones will be strengthened. No one should be beyond the reach of national or international justice in cases of gender violence, particularly sexual violence in situations of conflict. Hence Ecuador, as a State party, supports the International Criminal Court and calls on those States that have not yet done so, particularly those involved in conflict of any sort, to accede to the Rome Statute.

Finally, Ecuador stresses that combating impunity is vital in order to deal with the issue of sexual violence in conflict. But even more important is to address the causes of conflict, that is, the arms economy and violence committed by the powerful. Our commitment is to build a true culture of peace and new ways of coexistence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Ms. Enstrom (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

I would like to begin by thanking the United Kingdom presidency for having organized this open debate and the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also express warm thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura and Special Envoy Jolie as well as to the representative of civil society for their crucial role in developing, advocating and implementing this agenda.

We welcome the adoption today of resolution 2106 (2013), which, together with resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) complement landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. All five Nordic countries are sponsors of today's resolution.

We also welcome the United Kingdom's initiative on preventing sexual violence in conflict and the subsequent Group of Eight declaration, which we hope will enforce the already existing array of mechanisms within the United Nations and at the regional and national levels. The focus on sexual violence is important but should not come at the expense of the broader agenda on women, peace and security.

In my statement, I would like to focus on three issues: the need to strengthen the participation of both women and men in efforts to prevent sexual violence; the need to strengthen national ownership and to build capacity at the national level to effectively fight impunity; and the need for accountability, to end the culture of impunity for such crimes.

The full and equal participation of women and men in conflict prevention and peacebuilding is fundamental to combating sexual violence. Solutions must encompass all sectors of society, both in peacetime and in times of conflict. Women must not be seen merely as victims but as active participants who are central to all efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict.

Experience shows that women's involvement in peace processes can lead to more legitimate and lasting agreements. We need women to participate actively not only in United Nations field operations and missions, but also in national and local institutions.

Efforts to end sexual violence in conflict must include scrutiny of how gender roles are shaped and upheld in peacetime. Societies that view men as superior create an environment that is conducive to sexual violence in armed conflict.

As Minister for Defence, I would like to emphasize the importance of integrating a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations. If we neglect information from 50 per cent of the local population, missions will be less successful. If we do not include half the population in our security assessments, we cannot address the security needs of the whole population.

Two months ago, I visited Mali, a country whose northern regions are currently experiencing conflict.

As in any conflict situation, it is the international community's responsibility to ensure accountability for the atrocities committed, including sexual violence. We welcome the United Nations-led peacekeeping operation to Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and the deployment of a senior women's protection adviser from the outset. It is in all our interests that operations include a gender perspective and awareness of sexual violence in conflict.

The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, established last year, supports military organizations in applying a gender perspective in operations. The centre is a hub for the exchange of knowledge and experience in this area.

On the issue of accountability, if a State is unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute such international crimes, the ICC and other international tribunals play a crucial role. But the ICC is a court of last resort. Together we must build political support and technical capacity so as to enable the effective prosecution of sexual violence at the national level.

We also call on the Security Council sanctions Committee to focus on sexual violence crimes and to use its powers to combat impunity, and we welcome the gender provisions contained in the recently adopted United Nations Arms Trade Treaty.

We commend the contribution of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as the Justice Rapid Response, which serves to support the strengthening of the national capacity to investigate and prosecute such crimes.

Let us not forget the importance of providing justice for those men and women who are victims of crimes of sexual violence. The crime itself causes pain, trauma and psychological stigma for survivors. It is crucial that services be in place, including access to emergency contraception and safe abortion. The right to make decisions about one's own body, life and sexual health is a basic human right. Survivors must know that they are not alone and that justice can be done.

In closing, let me commend the Council's crucial work in advancing the women, peace and security agenda. But let me also reiterate our expectations that the Council will make use of its powers in order to achieve our common goal: to end sexual violence in conflict once and for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Mr. Germanas (Lithuania): I would like to start by congratulating the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council for the month of June for holding this important debate.

Lithuania associates itself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

In my national capacity, let me express Lithuania's full support for the recommendations contained in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149). Let me also commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her personal dedication and commitment.

To tackle impunity, sustained comprehensive efforts are needed at the national level to guarantee the prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence and support for survivors. The Council could make a major difference by supporting the early establishment of national reparations programmes as well as developing a more robust monitoring and reporting system.

National action plans on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) are an important tool that should be fully utilized. Lithuania's national action plan, adopted in December 2011, contains a variety of measures aimed at women's empowerment through literacy, education, networking and the development of skills. It has direct linkages with Lithuania's development cooperation programmes, which include a strong gender element.

All pre-departure training for Lithuanian military and police personnel participating in international missions includes specific training on gender issues. Lithuania strongly supports the inclusion of gender-based violence and violence against women and children among the mandatory assessment criteria for arms exports in the international Arms Trade Treaty.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes, including stringent vetting of personnel, provide an important window of opportunity for effective justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict. Security sector reforms must include provisions on the personal accountability of the police and the military, all the way up to the leadership.

Establishing effective oversight, transparency, and human rights and gender training for security sector personnel is instrumental in countering the culture of impunity. My delegation welcomes the Secretary General's recommendation that blanket amnesties should not be applied where conflict-related sexual violence is in question. My delegation strongly supports the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy towards sexual misconduct in the United Nations peacekeeping ranks, including the relevant provisions in all peacekeeping mandates. We call on the Security Council to use the tools at its disposal in a more systematic way, including the setting-up of commissions of inquiry, individual targeted sanctions and referrals to the International Criminal Court.

We must show iron-clad determination and political will to stamp out impunity for sexual crimes as a tool of war. Statesmen, political and religious leaders, women's groups, community elders and human rights defenders must join forces to generate global consensus on the need to end impunity and pursue accountability at all levels. By doing so, we shall give restore the voices of the victims of sexual violence in conflict and create a powerful deterrent for all those who may be tempted to resort to sexual crimes as a tactic of war.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. The presidency will cut off those delegations that speak for significantly more than four minutes.

I also wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a very large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Machado (Brazil): I thank you, Sir, for convening this debate. I also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks. We are grateful to Special Representative Zainab Bangura for her presentation. My delegation also thanks Ms. Jane Adong Anywar and Ms. Angelina Jolie for their participation.

Sexual violence is probably one of the most shameful facets of armed conflict. Despite the progress achieved since the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), the deliberate use of sexual violence as a tactic of war is still widespread. Effectively addressing the remaining challenges requires combining prevention, justice and support to victims.

As with any other type of violence against civilians, conflict prevention is the best way to ensure the protection of women and girls. First and foremost, parties and the international community, especially the Council, must actively seek to prevent conflict from arising and, if conflict emerges, resolutely commit to settling their differences by peaceful means. This is an ethical imperative and an objective international obligation under the Charter.

The effective prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict also requires the strengthening of national institutions and capabilities so that States can lead in designing and implementing comprehensive domestic strategies in this domain. The international community's duty is to provide adequate support to local authorities, when requested, and cooperate with national efforts in areas such as awareness-raising, education campaigns, reconciliation and early-warning systems.

Furthermore, through peacekeeping operations and special political missions, the United Nations can play an important preventive role. To that end, Member States must ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to activities in this area in the United Nations budget. We must also adequately train our peacekeepers in women, peace and security issues. The Secretariat and missions throughout the world must continue to improve prevention tools. In this regard, Brazil is pleased at the progress made on the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements.

In our prevention efforts, the interlinkage between security, development and sustainable peace must not be overlooked. Prevention can greatly benefit from women's empowerment and gender equality, which in many cases depend on social inclusion and economic opportunity. Adequately responding to the needs of women in areas such as education, employment and health services helps create favourable preconditions for their long-term protection.

The consistent prosecution of sexual crimes is a strong deterrent to future incidents. The United Nations is in a unique position to cooperate with national authorities, as appropriate, in strengthening national justice systems. Brazil welcomes the work of Ms. Bangura's office in this area, as well as the valuable role that the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict can play.

National Governments should also focus on seeking to improve services for victims. Authorities and societies must be ready to provide the critical health, psychosocial, legal and other support needed by women and girls who have been subject to the horrors of sexual violence in conflict situations.

Brazil is seeking to do its part. Our Ministry of Defence has signed a letter of intent with UN-Women to deepen our cooperation regarding the training of peacekeepers on gender issues and the promotion of South-South cooperation on this subject. In Haiti, we have been helping to build local capacity to deal with victims of gender-based violence in areas such as health, justice and security. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than 400 victims of sexual violence have benefited from the Brazilian contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The international community must continue to work together to translate the increasing global awareness of the scourge of sexual violence in conflict into actual improvement of the security of women in armed conflict. Brazil remains committed to this cause.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Moura (Portugal): I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative Zainab Bangura for their remarks. I commend all Council members for the adoption by consensus of resolution 2106 (2013) today, which Portugal has co-sponsored and which will help us to further implement our common fight agains sexual violence.

Portugal obviously shares the views that will be expressed by the observer of the European Union, but allow me to underline some aspects of particular significance to my country.

In recent years, Security Council resolutions have recognized sexual violence as a tactic of war and its potential to undermine peace and security. We need to recognize that much has been accomplished since 2010. Monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements have been established in a number of conflict or post-conflict situations to collect more consistent information on conflict related sexual violence. A list of parties to conflicts that are credibly suspected of committing sexual violence on a repeated basis has been set up. A dialogue with those parties has been established by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to obtain protection commitments and the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict has been formed to assist national authorities to reinforce judicial systems. Last but not least, the Council has adopted sanctions against perpetrators that have been identified or that are credibly suspected of having committed sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on its agenda.

Portugal values those significant achievements because there is no real security without women's security. The achievements will increasingly make sexual violence a liability for armed groups by exposing their leaders to international scrutiny and pressure. Another accomplishment that we value is the knowledge that has been developed on the issue in the past three years by the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The different dimensions of the problem are now better understood, and by better understanding the problem, the international community will be in a better position to fight it efficiently.

Portugal recognizes that, while the Council has been quite successful in discharging its responsibilities, much more can be done to reinforce the effectiveness of our common fight against sexual violence. We strongly support, in that regard, the five-point priority agenda carried out by Special Representative Zainab Bangura: ending impunity, empowering women, mobilizing political leadership, increasing recognition of rape as a tactic and consequence of conflict and ensuring a more coherent response from the United Nations system. Those five elements represent fundamental goals that are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

We should start to work towards the effectiveness of our fight against sexual violence by making full use of the existing tools — for instance, by ensuring the deployment in relevant peacekeeping operations of women's protection advisers, who will strengthen the prevention and the response to sexual violence. Many challenges have delayed the deployment of those advisers, even when specifically requested by the Council. That should not be acceptable. Constraints in the establishment of peacekeeping missions should not be at the expense of women's protection advisers, especially if sexual violence has been identified as a major concern in a conflict or post-conflict situation.

Anther promising tool at the disposal of Member States that could be further engaged is the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The lack of capacity at the national level to investigate and prosecute sexual violence remains the main obstacle to ensuring accountability, and leads to the prevalence of impunity. It is, therefore, extremely encouraging that a number of countries have already requested technical cooperation from the Team to respond promptly and effectively to conflict-related sexual violence and to strengthen the capacity of their national rule of law and justice actors. Portugal commends the three United Nations entities — the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme — for their work in providing assistance in preventing and addressing that form of violence.

Urgent action in another dimension of the broader women, peace and security agenda will also have a positive impact on our common fight against sexual violence. Indeed, the full and effective participation of women in formal peace processes will allow peacemakers to benefit fully from their knowledge and experience. By empowering women and upholding women's rights, we will also fight sexual violence more efficiently.

Women are often — intentionally or by a lack of security structures — placed at risk. It is striking that sexual violence has been absent so often from peace talks and peace agreements, including those that have followed conflicts where sexual violence was a major feature of the fighting. The Security Council and the United Nations can, in general, play an important role in changing that situation. Sexual violence needs to be included in the definition of acts prohibited by ceasefires, and needs to be reflected in specific provisions of peace agreements related to security arrangements and transitional justice.

In past years, some notable actions have been taken to combat impunity at national and international levels. Governments have prosecuted senior officers of their armed forces for crimes of sexual violence, and leaders of parties to armed conflict have been arrested and transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Subsequent verdicts of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the ICC constitute important landmarks of international justice and demonstrate that accountability for sexual violence is possible. They send a clear signal to many parties to armed conflict throughout the world that impunity is unacceptable. But they also send a powerful signal to the victims of sexual violence that no political or military leader is above the law. That fundamental political message needs to be constantly emphasized by the United Nations, and by the Security Council, in particular.

I conclude this intervention with a word for the victims and the survivors of sexual violence. There is a need for recognition and reparation. There is a crucial need to extend affordable and accessible health services to survivors. Our aim is, certainly, to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice; but also to bring justice and adequate care to the survivors and victims of such hideous crimes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank Minister Hague for his focus on inscribing the prevention of sexual violence on the international agenda. The statement recently adopted by the Group of Eight (G-8), the Minister's visit to the Great Lakes region and the decision to hold a debate of the Security

Council on the issue are all extremely useful initiatives in the context of the international campaign against sexual violence in conflict.

I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/149) and for his briefing this morning. The recommendations in his report are included in resolution 2106 (2013), which the Council has adopted today. Belgium welcomes the comprehensive operational framework outlined in the resolution to fight sexual violence in conflict, and is proud to co-sponsor the text.

My thanks also go to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for her unwavering commitment. In clearly emphasizing the importance of national leadership, she has successfully negotiated specific commitments with the Governments of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Somalia.

As the Special Representative is aware, my country has always been a strong advocate of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security; she also knows how wholeheartedly Belgium supports her mandate and her action plan. I note that my country is currently finalizing its second national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), covering the period 2013-2016.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union. I shall therefore limit my remarks to four points of particular importance for Belgium.

First, conflict-related sexual violence can amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Such violations of international law are imprescriptible and perpetrators incur heavy penalties. During Minister Hague's visit to the Great Lakes region, he saw for himself how the lives of women and children continue to be destroyed every day by such crimes. We remain convinced that national courts must remain the locus of prosecution of perpetrators of serious international crimes, such as sexual violence. In that context, it is important to strengthen the judicial systems of those countries in order to allow trials to take place in the best possible conditions. The Special Representative has announced the important signing by the Congolese authorities of an agreement in principle to fight against sexual violence. In the light of recent human rights violations in the region, we nevertheless believe that the implementation of the agreement must be constantly monitored.

Secondly, the International Criminal Court is complementary to national criminal courts. The broad definition of sexual violence in the Rome Statute should be applied in this context. We invite those countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Statute without further delay.

Thirdly, I would also like to thank the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for its determined and courageous actions. We also attach great importance to the activities of the intergovernmental organization Justice Rapid Response, which specializes in the deployment of the panels of experts where sexual violence has been committed. Belgium supports all efforts to build the capacities of national actors and all initiatives to aid the victims.

Fourthly, Belgium would also like to recall that any sexual violence is a serious violation of human rights. In that context, everything must be done to ensure that victims have access to all necessary services from multiple sectors.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mrs. Morgan (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for bringing this important matter to the attention of the Security Council. Also allow me to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General and to his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for their briefings. My country welcomes the adoption today of resolution 2106 (2013), which sends a resounding message concerning the fight against impunity and the need to focus our efforts on the prosecution of that crime as a fundamental aspect of prevention.

My country deplores and condemns the recent, numerous cases of sexual violence recorded by the Secretary-General in his current report (S/2013/149). Mexico recognizes that the perpetration of acts of sexual violence in a post-conflict society impedes the restoration of peace and the security of the population, as well as the establishment of solid governmental institutions. The support of the agencies of the Organization and of regional organizations are fundamental elements in eradicating the social, cultural, economic and political dynamics that give rise to this these types of acts.

Mexico commends the efforts and actions of the United Nations, its agencies and the Governments of States in conflict. However, much remains to be done in order to ensure full access for victims to systems of justice and reparation and to ensure that the perpetrators of the acts are brought before the corresponding tribunals. To that end, it is fundamental that States provide the necessary training and skills for armed and security forces in order to combat the perpetration of those crimes. Of equal importance is the training of magistrates and other agents of justice in order to ensure effective, independent and impartial judicial systems that are well versed in that area.

International criminal justice and mixed tribunals are undoubtedly an indispensable complement to those efforts. Mexico welcomes the progress that has been made in the implementation of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

The Security Council must continue to use all resources at its disposal in targeting the perpetrators of acts of sexual violence through the adoption of selective and phased measures through its sanctions committees, the ad hoc and mixed tribunals, and the special chambers of national tribunals.

Mexico emphasizes the relevance and usefulness of the International Criminal Court and its complementary competency in order to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of international crimes, including the war crime of sexual violence. We encourage those States that have not yet done so to accede to the Rome Statute as soon as possible in order to achieve the universalization of that important instrument. We encourage States to cooperate so that the Court is able to effectively fulfil the mandate for which it was established.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating that Mexico is convinced that there can be no lasting peace without justice and that there is no room for amnesty for international crimes, such as that of sexual violence in conflicts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Waxman (Israel): Let me begin by thanking you, Sir, for convening this important debate. It brings much needed awareness and attention to an important subject. I would also like to recognize the excellent work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, and her team.

This fall will mark 13 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) and three years since it adopted resolution 1960 (2010). Those resolutions reflect the international community's desire to advance gender equality and denounce sexual violence in conflict. While those aspirations are the subject of frequent discussions and debates within these halls, on the ground — where it really counts — women continue to be marginalized and victimized. Around the world, at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. International resolve must be met with concrete action.

We cannot hope to tackle the issue of sexual violence in conflict while even in times of peace women are victims of gender bias and discrimination. The first step is to address the significant gaps that exist in many countries' legal systems. Violence against women takes root in cultures of discrimination that relegate women to second-class citizens and deny them the political, legal and economic rights that men enjoy.

Israel believes that women's rights are integral to building a just society in which all citizens live free of violence and their human rights are respected and protected. Israel is proud to sponsor resolution 2106 (2013) as we have with all previous resolutions on women and peace and security.

It is the legal and moral obligation of all States to protect women and girls from sexual violence. There must be a system of law and justice that leaves no doubt that sexual intimidation and violence aimed at women is inexcusable. In the Middle East, many legal systems do not meet basic international standards when it comes to protecting women. In some instances, marital rape is not regarded as a criminal offence, and there are no procedures in place to deal with cases of domestic sexual abuse.

In certain States, thousands of women are victims of so-called honour killings. Owing to weak and indifferent justice systems, perpetrators who claim to have preserved family honour are rarely prosecuted, or if they are, they receive light sentences. In those instances, women are victimized twice — first by the perpetrator of the crime and then by an indifferent justice system. Often, rape survivors are forced to marry their rapists, and there are countless examples in which women and girls have been imprisoned for so-called moral crimes.

In Syria, under Bashar Al-Assad's brutal regime, the death toll has surpassed 93,000, and more than one-third of the population requires humanitarian assistance. The Syrian army and its State-sponsored militia, known as the Shabbiha, have employed sexual violence as devastating weapons in a ruthless campaign of intimidation. As described in the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict of March 2013 (S/2013/149), Syrian forces have committed rape, torture and other inhumane acts that constitute war crimes. Approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees have fled their homes. Thousands of women and children who escaped sexual violence in Syria now live in constant fear of kidnapping, assault and rape inside refugee camps.

As a family of nations, our responsibility to one another stems from our common humanity. Our moral imperative supersedes whatever politics, religion or geography may divide us. There can be zero tolerance for sexual violence. We must tirelessly persist until the day when women are the agents of peace rather than the victims of war.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Right Honourable William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, for holding this very important debate. Japan appreciates the United Kingdom's initiative on preventing sexual violence in conflict, including the Group of Eight (G-8) process.

I also would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their respective briefings. I would also like to thank and welcome the participation of the representatives from civil society.

Japan welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), which further strengthens the framework established by the previous relevant resolutions and contains critical operational guidance. As described in the historic Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict adopted at the Group of Eight Summit, held in London on 11 April — the early implementation of which was encouraged by the G-8 leaders last week — despite various efforts, sexual violence in conflict continues to occur in the twenty-first century, and we share the view that more must be done to address these ongoing crimes. Japan is committed to holding perpetrators to account and to supporting victims.

First, in order to prevent sexual violence, we need to raise the cost to perpetrators and end the culture of impunity. In this regard, it is essential that we support national Governments in meeting their own challenges in terms of justice and accountability, and that we strengthen international justice mechanisms. With regard to the former, Japan is helping national Governments to develop their legal systems and facilitate security sector reform. With regard to the latter, Japan attaches great importance to the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Japan, as a leading contributor to the ICC, believes that there is a need to further promote the Court's universality, and expects the dialogue and collaboration between the Security Council and the ICC to deepen.

Furthermore, the effective investigation and documentation of crimes of sexual violence are instrumental in bringing perpetrators to justice. To that end, developing the capacity of national Governments to investigate crimes and raising awareness of and sensitivity to sexual violence are both essential. In that regard, Japan believes that providing standard guidelines would be useful, and therefore supports the development of an international protocol on the investigation and documentation of sexual violence in conflict.

Secondly, we also recognize the importance of providing relief to the victims of sexual violence. Japan is committed to ensuring that multi-sectoral assistance and services are provided to victims. In this connection, we would like to mention that, in April of this year, Mr. Motoo Noguchi, a former judge in the Supreme Court Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia, was elected Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims.

Thirdly, Japan recently made a contribution of $1 million to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which is managed by UN-Women. We are also currently taking part in efforts to raise awareness of the Fund, and to expand its donor base, including private sector donors.

In closing, Japan reiterates its full support for the mandate of Special Representative Bangura and commends her proactive engagements. We would also like to underline the important role played by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in

Conflictin fostering national ownership, leadership and responsibility in addressing sexual violence. Japan strongly supports their efforts and will cooperate closely with them.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Berger (Germany): I thank Great Britain for organizing this debate and Secretary Hague in particular for his personal commitment. I also congratulate the United States on having so ably negotiated resolution 2106 (2013) adopted today.

We also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative Zainab Bangura and commend them for their leadership, as well as today's briefers.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

We welcome the focus of today's debate on addressing accountability and the fight against impunity. Let me be clear — our ultimate goal has to be, first and foremost, the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. In cases where acts of sexual violence have already occurred, it is indispensable that perpetrators be immediately brought to justice and survivors receive adequate support and redress. Only effective criminal prosecution during and after conflict will lead to an equally effective prevention system that can help to create long-term peace.

Let me stress some important points and provide some practical examples. First, it cannot be stressed enough that part of any effective prevention of sexual violence is the equal involvement of women. Not only the consideration of their special needs, but also their participation in all stages of decision-making processes are essential. This also applies to programmes such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and transitional justice. In this regard, Germany has supported, inter alia, a regional project in the Horn of Africa to empower women by helping them to gain access to political and economical decision-making processes.

Secondly, when sexual violence constitutes a crime against humanity, a war crime or even genocide, it has to be subject to punishment and has to be excluded from amnesty provisions. Whenever States are not willing or capable to fulfil their responsibility to prosecute perpetrators accordingly, the international community must react in order to prevent a culture of impunity, as was recently stressed at the Group of Eight meeting in the United Kingdom. Regional justice mechanisms and the International Criminal Court (ICC) can also play an important role. We also welcome the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura's Office in this regard.

The German Centre for International Peace Operations offers special pre-deployment courses on establishing the rule of law, which emphasize the need to prosecute sexual violence and raise awareness for gender-based violence.

Thirdly, appropriate medical and psychosocial support for survivors of sexual violence, including access to sexual reproductive health services, as well as access to justice and reparations, are fundamental prerequisites for the effective reintegration of women into their respective societies. Germany has, for example, funded several medical counseling centres in Congo, where women can receive medical and psychological support, as well as emergency HIV post-exposure prophylaxis. We also support transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth and reconciliation committees, and dialogue between these and women's rights organizations.

Lastly, our full support is needed by those who are essential to the fight against the scourge of sexual violence, such as human rights defenders, doctors and journalists, who are themselves at special risk.

Let me end by stressing that the Security Council has a role to play in monitoring the commitments made by parties to conflicts. In this regard, it can and should do more to hold perpetrators accountable. Without having to create a new mechanism, it could already make use of the tools at hand, for example by reacting to cases of sexual violence in a certain country with Security Council press statements, by writing specific letters to concerned Governments or by referring specific cases more frequently to the Sanctions Committees and, as a last resort, to the ICC.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes the presence of Foreign Secretary Hague, and the attention paid to this important issue by the Group of Eight and the United Kingdom in particular. We also welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and Special Representative Bangura, who has been a fearless advocate on sexual violence in conflict. We applaud the passion that they and many others have brought to this discussion.

As my delegation said in the April debate on sexual violence in conflict during the Rwandan presidency (see S/PV.6948), it is vitally important that the Council send a clear message on the issue of sexual violence to the entire international community and that it does so through, inter alia, the strong statements made in debates like this. We welcome the United Kingdom's concept note (S/2013/335, annex) and the Secretary-General's most recent report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149), both of which correctly highlight that national Governments have primary legal and moral responsibility for the protection of civilian populations, including from sexual violence in conflict.

Indeed, as the Secretary-General's report identifies, the lack at the national level of capacity to investigate and prosecute is one of the principal impediments to ensuring accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. We agree with Portugal and others that the United Nations, across its relevant divisions such as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, must continue its efforts to focus on supporting national efforts.

We have received excellent information and recommendations from today's briefers and from Member State interventions, often, as I have said, with considerable passion. Against that background, I wish to make a few specific points.

The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict provides important technical assistance to national authorities attempting to bolster national civil and military justice systems. Building national capacity remains one of the best and most comprehensive ways to address sexual violence in conflict, so we very strongly support the assistance regarding national capacities being provided to various Governments by the Team of Experts. Indeed, to underscore its importance, we encourage continued further reference to the work of the Team of Experts in relevant Council outputs.

Next, accountability for sexual violence does not lend itself to a one-size-fits-all approach. The Council must be agile, inclusive and open to considering alternative courses of action. Presidential and public statements from the Council give voice to the international community's abhorrence for sexual violence and send a very strong signal that it will not be tolerated. But words alone are not enough, and, in appropriate circumstances, where national authorities are unwilling or unable to act, the Council should consider referrals to the International Criminal Court. Similarly, the Council should also consider the use of mixed tribunals and truth and reconciliation processes, and any judicial measures should be clearly victim-focused.

We also encourage the Council to include this topic in its annual consultations with the African Union's Peace and Security Council. The perspectives and expertise of regional organizations are valuable in developing comprehensive strategies for addressing accountability for sexual violence in conflict.

We also highlight the important role that non-governmental organizations and civil society groups can play in drawing attention to some of the worst abuses, and their related role as an important part of the accountability landscape — sometimes, as the representative of Germany has pointed out, by putting themselves at considerable special risk.

New Zealand welcomes the Council's consideration of this specific aspect of the women, peace and security agenda, and we urge that it give consideration to the specific issues we have raised and that it also remain seized of the wider agenda, including women's participation in political processes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan): We join other delegations in commending the United Kingdom for its outstanding, persistent and welcomed championing of this critical issue. We welcome the Foreign Secretary to New York, and we are also grateful to the Secretary-General and to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Bangura for their comments and insights this morning.

I will not delve into the scope of the mandate of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura, a United Nations official whom we admire greatly and support, nor even speak of the very necessary role of the International Criminal Court, which, for us, is a logical given. What I hope to do in the next few minutes is pose a most basic question and make three broad suggestions.

I begin by asking this: do we, as a collective membership, bound together in this Organization and by its Charter, have the credibility to offer strong opinions on this subject matter? Do we have the credibility when together we have all refused to undertake the complete range of actions necessary to ensure that sexual abuse and exploitation by our own peacekeepers, United Nations peacekeepers, be reduced to zero?

Can we not be accused by others of brazen hypocrisy when we condemn in this Chamber all expressions of conflict-related sexual violence committed against women, girls and boys, and speak of them as unjust and intolerable — and we have done this for 13 years now — and then down the hall, only a few metres from here, in the Sixth Committee, we do next to nothing, year in and year out, on the draft convention on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, a draft which has been on the agenda of the Sixth Committee since 2007.

Do we have any credibility when we insist that the United Nations has no business in relation to the conduct of investigations into alleged crimes committed by our own United Nations uniformed peacekeepers, knowing that in the past we, the Member States, were not reliable enough in guaranteeing that justice was done in respect of the victims?

Are we credible when in 2012, the last Office of Internal Oversight Services reporting period, we still had 42 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse involving United Nations peacekeepers being investigated by that Office? By now, some seven years after we identified both the challenge and the plan needed to eliminate this odious phenomenon, there should be practically no cases at all. I do not wish to be misunderstood: if we had done everything we should have done over the past seven years to ensure the total elimination of this abominable practice by our own peacekeepers, and they still occurred, then we could accept that there is little more we can do. But we, as Member States, have not done everything, and so we cannot make that claim.

The United Nations is required to set an example before our publics as an Organization that will without question pay special attention to the most vulnerable and defenceless protected persons in war, with, first, a guaranteed protection provided by ourselves, from ourselves and then from others. My intention here is not to cast doubt on or belittle the outstanding service and contributions of United Nations peacekeepers. As a former peacekeeper myself, I would never do that; I would never disgrace their efforts. I know only too well and first-hand what they do and can endure. But I also know that we have long treated those individuals who dare commit sexual abuses too lightly. Indeed, while it is they who in the end disgrace United Nations peacekeeping, we on occasion also contribute to it by our clear indifference. I hope that this debate will restart this discussion.

So what must we do regarding United Nations peacekeeping? We must adopt the convention on criminal accountability as soon as possible; we must make the United Nations a co-examiner of the facts, even when the allegations involve United Nations military personnel. We must be more transparent regarding the severity and nature of the crimes being committed by United Nations peacekeepers. We must do better on matters relating to paternity. In situ court-martials for military offenders must be the rule and not the exception for sexual offences, and we must consider again the proposal that all United Nations personnel destined for field service submit a sample of their DNA to the United Nations before they embark, both to serve as a deterrent to the commission of crimes and also for the sake of possible subsequent investigations, including establishing paternity. And, lastly, we, the Member States, need to report to the UN clearly and at the earliest possible time, what judicial steps were undertaken by our authorities with respect to the alleged crimes.

Beyond United Nations peacekeeping, what else should the United Nations do to assist societies or countries in war, or emerging from war, to address sexual violence and end impunity?

The United Nations, in our opinion, requires a single vehicle for the delivery of judicial and legal advice. My delegation has been saying this for many years now. So crucial is a functioning, credible judiciary to every State's existence, it is remarkable that, 68 years after the founding of the United Nations, while we have single-purpose departments and agencies for almost everything, we do not have one for this: only a hodge-podge of rule-of-law offices, representatives, units and experts scattered throughout the Secretariat and specialized agencies.

It would be like having a major modern hospital containing wings dedicated to every known medical specialty and sub-specialty, but with no division dedicated to cardiology or cardiovascular surgery — only a few cardiologists scattered throughout the hospital — because somehow we thought the heart did not merit it. What we have is simply insufficient.

The United Nations needs a service, a full-fledged department that, on request, can advise Member States that seek to upgrade or reform their judiciary or prosecution services or wish to improve their penal codes. United Nations missions of every variety would also require its services. If we are to be serious about ending impunity for sexual crimes in the context of war, that is what we need. Teams of experts are a good start where the action of the Security Council is concerned but fall woefully short of what is required, and I myself have seen this in United Nations field operations.

Secondly, we must support all and every effort aimed at the creation of an international repository for evidence — a complicated business, we know, owing to concerns relating to contamination and admissibility. Nevertheless, we must try to set it up. We would then be in a position to better assist national jurisdictions that are incapable of or unwilling to prosecute during conflict, but would in some cases be better able to do so post-conflict. Such a facility could also be of service to the International Criminal Court.

Finally, while my delegation believes that it is of course necessary to focus on women, girls and boys as the obvious victims of sexual violence in the context of war, there is an unfortunate aspect to that view, which is that we give the impression that only the young count. In all conflicts, in our experience, it is the elderly, women and men, who are often the most vulnerable to the horrors of war, simply because their immobility in many cases means they cannot flee. Elderly women can therefore be, and often are, more easily assaulted sexually and then murdered, than younger women. Without, of course, taking our eyes off the young, we should all also pay more attention to the elderly and disabled in war than we have done thus far.

The President: I wish once again to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sexual violence in conflict is a phenomenon that should receive more and urgent attention, and Spain welcomes every effort of the international community to continue working to combat this scourge more effectively. We also welcome the Council's adoption this morning of resolution 2106 (2013), of which Spain was a sponsor. It is particularly pertinent in that it specifically addresses the issue of impunity as one of the key components in the fight against sexual violence in conflict. Combating impunity must be addressed with a comprehensive approach that promotes an education system that promotes the dignity and equality of men and women, a social system that condemns sexual violence and a legal mechanism aimed at ensuring the protection of victims and the punishment of perpetrators.

There are two key instruments in the fight against impunity for crimes of sexual violence in conflict — legal codes and training. An adequate legal code ensures that the necessary legal tools are in place in order to bring perpetrators to justice. I reiterate Spain's support for the conclusions of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which highlighted the inclusion of crimes of sexual violence in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the fact that the ad hoc international criminal tribunals recognize rape and other forms of sexual violence as possible war crimes, crimes against humanity or acts of genocide or torture.

The most recent reform of Spain's military code of conduct includes the obligation to provide specific protection to women and children against rape, enforced prostitution, humiliating and degrading treatment or any other form of exploitation or sexual assault within the context of armed conflict.

Regarding training, we must realize that in a post-conflict scenario, where legal systems are broken, it is essential that the reconstruction of national capacities includes specific training on cultures of impunity. Spain has therefore given support to specific programmes in that area through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Spain Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund. To cite but two examples, in South Sudan efforts have been focused primarily on educating and raising awareness in indigenous communities on gender equality, while in Colombia the programme has involved training women in human rights and violence prevention so that they can later replicate such teaching in their communities.

Since combating impunity should be specifically included in humanitarian and development programmes, the Spanish Humanitarian Aid Office has drafted a guide to addressing sexual violence in humanitarian interventions. Legal codification and training are indispensable in the fight against impunity, but beyond that there is a need for clear political will in order to see that perpetrators are prosecuted and to guarantee legal and social protection for victims. Therein lies the importance of including the subject of responsibility in peace agreements and supporting the participation and advancement of women in peacebuilding processes. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the UNDP/Spain Fund I just mentioned, we have promoted the establishment of a number of assistance centres aimed at providing psycho-social support and training for women victims of acts of sexual violence, in order to facilitate their social and economic reintegration.

The commitment of States and international organizations to fighting impunity must be further strengthened through an ongoing debate within the international community, so as to create mechanisms that can effectively prosecute any form of sexual violence in conflict. Spain will do its utmost to participate actively in the various forums addressing the issue. At the most recent session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Spain took part in both the interactive dialogue based on the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (A/HRC/23/49), and in the panel on women's rights that took place in the same context. In both forums Spain emphasized the importance of criminalization and deplored the deficiencies that emerge when dealing with violence against women, due to a lack of specific training and education, and to the patriarchal and stereotypical patterns that hinder appropriate approaches to such cases, both in terms of prosecution and investigation. Such debates must help raise awareness of the importance of firm condemnation of such crimes and result in the Council's renewed support for advancing the fight against impunity and maintaining a proactive stance to help reduce the incidence of sexual violence in conflict and refer such cases to the International Criminal Court.

Finally, the observer of the European Union will be delivering a statement that Spain naturally aligns itself with and has actively contributed to.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): I would like to thank the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council for holding this important debate, and all the briefers for their statements.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would also like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) paints a grim picture. Women and girls suffer from sexual violence in armed conflict. Victims are often left alone and unprotected when pursuing legal action, or are otherwise effectively denied access to justice. Perpetrators benefit from a climate of impunity. It is essential that we address the problem comprehensively. In my own country, in the heart of Europe, rape was used as a method of intimidation and terror during the aggression to which we were exposed at the beginning of the 1990s. Today, Croatia's strong commitment to gender equality, domestically and internationally, is well established. Our work on the agenda of women and peace and security is a key priority, and we are ready to contribute.

Croatia welcomes the Group of Eight (G-8) Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, announced at the ministerial meeting held in London in April. It is an important signal from some of the world's most powerful countries that the G-8 is ready to take a prominent role in preventing and combating sexual violence in war and conflicts.

Women are often victims of armed conflict, but they can also play a central role in preventing and resolving violent conflicts, as actors in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The continued high incidence of horrific sexual violence against women and girls in conflicts demands the international community's attention as a human rights matter and as a question of ensuring respect for international humanitarian law. It is an issue that bears directly on peace and security. The Council's landmark resolution, 1325 (2000), is still not being fully implemented.

It is clear that the use of rape and sexual violence exacerbates conflicts and perpetuates them long after active hostilities are over. Such crimes inflict indelible scars on individuals, families and societies that make reconciliation and peacebuilding much more difficult.

A special effort is required to tackle the culture of impunity head-on. We can no longer tolerate impunity for the worst acts of violence against women and girls, as set forth in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. I wish to pay special tribute to all women and girl victims of the brutal violence in Syria. We must all join forces to end impunity for such crimes. The Statute of the International Criminal Court explicitly states that rape and other forms of sexual violence can be prosecuted as war crimes or crimes against humanity. Amnesties should not extend to crimes of sexual violence.

We also underline the importance that all relevant peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations properly address the impact of conflict on women and girls, and that the increased participation of women be encouraged. It is an approach that is reflected domestically through our National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which we launched in 2011. The plan is Croatia's blueprint for practical implementation of our obligations under resolution 1325 (2000).

We need much greater progress in ensuring the adequate participation of women in peace talks. The inclusion of relevant issues in peace agreements is the exception rather than the rule. Peace accords that fail to include women in post-conflict governance often neglect their access to economic opportunities, justice and reparations. We need to have more women as lead negotiators and ensure adequate gender expertise for peace processes.

Clear guidance on how to operationalize the protection of civilians mandate, including the protection of women and girls from sexual violence, is also needed for peacekeeping missions. We have the opportunity to use United Nations expertise, including such human rights mechanisms as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. All Member States should ensure that the training of peacekeepers includes training on resolution 1325 (2000).

Sexual violence is linked to the illicit extraction of natural resources and leads to the displacement of civilian populations. Armed groups use forced marriages, rape and sexual slavery as tactics during detentions or interrogation. The plight of children born of wartime rape, about which there is little or no information available and therefore no meaningful programmatic intervention, is a matter of our deepest concern.

Croatia welcomes the emphasis on the urgency of ensuring that sexual violence considerations are explicitly and consistently reflected in peace processes, ceasefires and peace agreements, and in all security sector reform and other processes in which the United Nations is involved. In that regard, we commend the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), which we are proud to have co-sponsored.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate.

Estonia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

The Security Council, through its resolutions, has developed a robust framework to prevent and address sexual violence in armed conflict. However, gender crimes remain an enduring part of most armed conflicts. The leading role the United Kingdom is playing in international efforts to combat sexual violence is therefore much needed and appreciated. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ms. Bangura, Ms. Jolie and Ms. Anwar for their statements, and passionate and inspiring commitment and dedication.

Special Representative Bangura has repeatedly underlined that there is no way to end sexual violence unless one ends impunity. Two weeks ago in the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Ms. Rashida Manjoo, underlined that States need to be held accountable not only for investigating all acts of violence against women, but also for failing to prevent such violence. In recent years, sexual violence and its threat have continued to be employed as a weapon of war. Armed conflicts have made evident the need to protect civilians, especially the most vulnerable groups of women and children.

Estonia calls on States to take further political steps to fulfil the promise of Security Council resolutions on ending sexual violence as a tactic of war, and also calls on everyone to adhere to those tenets of international humanitarian law that prohibit rape and other forms of sexual violence. As to the United Nations, the next important step would be the further implementation of monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence. We would also urge the further deployment of women's protection advisers to the Security Council-mandated missions.

Despite the increasing international focus on sexual violence in conflict, perpetrators of sexual violence are rarely held accountable. The vigorous investigation and prosecution of perpetrators are, however, necessary to deter and halt such violence. We share the assessment of Special Representative Bangura that national ownership, leadership and responsibility in addressing sexual violence are some of the most important aspects of the fight against sexual violence.

In a similar vein, in his report of March 2013 on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149), the Secretary-General notes that national courts remain the principal venue for holding individuals accountable for crimes of sexual violence and that the national authorities should be supported in that regard. This is crucial, as the lack of adequate national capacity and expertise to investigate and prosecute acts of sexual violence remains one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability for gender crimes. To date, sexual violence in armed conflict has been prosecuted primarily at the international level through hybrid courts and international tribunals. These tribunals do indeed play an important complimentary role to national efforts.

The International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda developed groundbreaking international jurisprudence outlawing rape and sexual violence during war. Investigating and prosecuting gender crimes has also been an integral part of the investigative and prosecutorial strategy of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC), built upon the recognition of sexual violence as a serious international crime by the ad hoc tribunals and expanded the scope of sexual violence-based crimes in international law. The Rome Statute specifies a greater number of sexual violence crimes than the statutes of the ad hoc tribunals, and acknowledges that these crimes can be committed against men and women. It is important that the Rome Statute's gender sensitivity be translated into national prosecutions to make sure that national proceedings take into account the gender dimension of atrocity crimes to the same extent as the Rome Statute does.

The ICC has also proven itself to be sensitive to gender crimes in practice. The Prosecutor gives priority to sexual and gender-based crimes from the outset of its preliminary investigations. Charges for gender-based crimes have so far been brought in cases arising from six of the eight situations. Estonia joins the Secretary-General in his call on the Council to employ all means at its disposal to address sexual violence in conflict, including through referrals to the ICC.

The ICC is, however, not only about punishing perpetrators, but also about empowering victims of atrocity crimes. The Court is committed to ensuring victims a participatory role in its proceedings, and the Rome Statute contains a relatively broad reparations provision. The Trust Fund for Victims established under the Rome Statute has been doing important work in countries where the court is conducting investigations to alleviate the suffering of victims. Among other activities, it is providing assistance to the victims of rape and to children born as a result of rape. In replenishing the Fund, Estonia has paid special attention to the needs of victims of sexual violence, who are very often stigmatized by their own communities. The trust fund is dependent on voluntary donations in order to effectively fulfil its mandate, and Estonia welcomes voluntary donations to the Fund.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): I would like to thank the United Kingdom for convening this very important debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, the Special Envoy of the High Commissioner, Ms. Jolie, and Ms. Anywar of the NGO Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice for their insightful statements.

In the twenty-first century, sexual violence is, sadly, still widespread, particularly in armed conflict, including its early stages and aftermath. Unfortunately, in conflicts, national judicial and security systems are often characterized by incapacity, leading to a culture of impunity. Legal codes on sexual violence do not exist or cannot be implemented. An absence of efficient criminal procedures and institutional capacity is common. Even when laws and judicial and security institutions are in place, a selective application of laws and a lack of accountability often prevail. As a result, victims are discouraged from seeking civil remedies, and a culture of impunity prevails.

To address this problem, comprehensive solutions should be sought by both ensuring the supremacy of the rule of law and by building judicial and security institutions. Gaps in legislation and implementation must be addressed. Criminal responsibility must be increased. Impunity must be ended both for perpetrators and those in the chain of command. The investigative capabilities of national institutions must be increased. Additional services such as legal support, protection for survivors of violence and training should be put in place. This is quite a formidable list of tasks.

It takes personnel, resources and time to end the culture of impunity. The continued support of the international community is essential. Punishment for the crime often serves as the most important deterrent. To address sexual violence during conflicts and ensure that these crimes can be prosecuted in the post-conflict phase, the necessary documentation and evidence must be gathered while the conflict is ongoing. The United Nations, other international organizations, humanitarian agencies and civil society have an important task in this respect.

The Security Council deserves special credit for connecting the concepts of sexual violence and impunity to international peace and security, passing numerous resolutions and addressing the issue in various meetings. We also welcome today's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013). The Council's efforts help strongly convey the message that sexual violence and impunity are unacceptable.

I would also like to commend the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for its valuable work. Acting in close partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including national judicial and security institutions, international and regional organizations, humanitarian agencies, civil society and the private sector, the United Nations should continue its technical assistance to countries suffering from conflict. International justice mechanisms are essential, especially when sexual violence is used as a war tactic in the form of systematic rape and forced pregnancies. In addition, especially in post-conflict set-ups, their work complements that of national systems in the fight against the culture of impunity.

I would like to touch upon three more concepts that we deem necessary when addressing impunity. The first is reparations. They are a form of transitional gender justice and contribute to truth and reconciliation.

Secondly, monitoring and reporting on incidents of sexual violence is important, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2013/149). We extend our full support to the endeavours of the United Nations in this area. In this respect, as a neighbouring country, Turkey took note with concern of the findings of the recent report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. In that regard, access should be granted to the commission to conduct on-site investigations with respect to the allegations of all human rights violations in Syria, including sexual violence against women.

Finally, raising awareness at the local, national, regional and international levels is key to combating impunity. Many remain silent before sexual violence, in the fear of being targeted, attacked, stigmatized or shamed. We must ensure that raising one's voice against this despicable crime becomes the norm, rather than the exception.

The elimination of the root causes of conflict is the best way to prevent sexual violence and address impunity. The establishment or restoration of the rule of law, good governance and socio-economic development is essential for sustainable solutions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Member States and all relevant United Nations bodies, in addition to all relevant stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global levels that have prioritized the issue of sexual violence against women in conflict. Special thanks go to Special Representative Bangura, whose exemplary dedication to fighting sexual violence in conflicts, including by combating impunity, we continue to support.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): We welcome this open debate and thank your delegation, Mr. President, for its useful concept paper (S/2013/335). While a continued emphasis on protection issues is crucial, we call at the same time for the same level of emphasis on the participation pillar of this agenda.

In recent years, we have witnessed an alarming increase in the documented use of sexual violence in armed conflict, often as a method of warfare to achieve military goals. Much remains to be done in terms of an effective response. Ending impunity is clearly a central element in this respect. Unfortunately, however, we must acknowledge that, in practice, the fight to end impunity has barely begun. Effective justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict continues to be a great exception to the rule.

The necessary work to that end is closely linked to broader efforts to strengthen justice and the rule of law. An effective judicial response requires States themselves to strengthen domestic justice systems in all their aspects, where appropriate, with the assistance of international donors and agencies. Particular emphasis should be placed on procedures that allow victims and witnesses to come forward while minimizing the risk of reprisals and that take into account the severe trauma that may have been inflicted on them.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) also has an important role to play, and we were therefore somewhat surprised not to see the ICC mentioned explicitly in the concept paper. The work of the Court can serve in particular as an incentive for Governments to deliver accountability at the domestic level. The Court can also assist such work by providing information and evidence for use in domestic proceedings, and it is well known that the ICC Prosecutor has made the fight against sexual violence a focus of her work.

The Security Council should more often call on Governments to prioritize the strengthening of domestic justice systems, but it should also be more assertive where national systems fail, through the establishment of fact-finding commissions, commissions of inquiry and referrals to the ICC. Where domestic justice systems have broken down completely, such measures may often be the only way of creating deterrence and enabling longer-term justice. Evidence needs to be professionally collected at the earliest possible stages, a process that may be assisted inter alia by the Justice Rapid Response initiative.

The Council's ability to respond depends on the availability of objective, accurate and reliable information. Monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and the work of the women's protection advisers are therefore of continued relevance.

There seems to be a major design flaw in our current national and international efforts to bring about justice for crimes of sexual violence — the voices of victims are rarely heard. This is lamentable and counterproductive, because a greater role for victims in this discourse could have a strong impact on the willingness of the relevant actors to bring about change.

To conclude, I would briefly like to recall that sexual violence also affects men and boys, as stated in the concept paper. In this context, we would like to inform delegations about the next session of our lecture series on women and peace and security. It will take place on 8 or 9 July and will focus on the role of men as perpetrators but also as victims of sexual violence in conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Govender (South Africa): My delegation would like to thank the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council for convening this important open debate. We would also like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for her commitment and efforts in addressing these egregious crimes.

While the Security Council has adopted the requisite resolutions to address those crimes, including resolution 2106 (2013) today, full and effective implementation of the key resolutions underpinning the women, peace and security agenda is critical to closing the existing protection gaps. The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/335) correctly alludes to a systemic United Nations response to that problem. However, we cannot agree more with the Secretary-General's observation that Member States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

We concur with the five-point priority agenda of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, but we believe that priority must be given to fostering national ownership, leadership and responsibility in addressing sexual violence in conflict, thereby ensuring its sustainability. The role of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict becomes crucial in enhancing the capacity-building of civilian and military justice systems to address sexual violence in conflict afflicted communities.

The technical assessment missions of peacekeeping operations should, as a matter of standard practice, include an agenda adviser whose primary task must be situational awareness, analysis and recommendations regarding the threat of or acts of sexual violence in conflict. As part of a systemic response, multidimensional peacekeeping missions should incorporate a public awareness campaign at the field level that encourages community involvement in monitoring and reporting of the threat of or actual incidences of all forms of sexual violence.

The Secretary-General's report highlights lessons that could be learned from security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes that went wrong in specific peacekeeping missions. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Security Council and other relevant United Nations entities should take stock of those lessons and ensure that subsequent mandates, renewals and transitions involving security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes prevent any escalation of threats to vulnerable communities.

While scenario-based training for peacekeepers is essential to enhancing operational readiness and prevention, it can never be a panacea for eliminating sexual violence in conflict. The reach of the national Government throughout its territories and its ability to exercise control over those territories through its national security apparatus, including law enforcement and military capabilities, will always remain integral to preventing and arresting sexual violence.

We support the recommendations of the Secretary-General as contained in his recent report. We believe, however, that the effective implementation of resolution 1960 (2010) will require greater involvement of women in conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding processes. While there is value in the Security Council's developing monitoring mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the provisions of resolution 1960 (2010), the greater involvement of women in negotiation and peacemaking processes brings with it a greater infusion of gender concerns and interests in the resolution process.

In closing, every effort must be made to end impunity by perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Making parties live up to their commitments in peace agreements, which include the prohibition of sexual violence in such agreements, is certainly one of the tools that must be utilized with fervour. The Security Council must also include measures that bring pressure to bear on perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, especially on individuals and parties, through targeted and graduated measures, as well as for the Security Council to immediately and unambiguously pronounce on those acts as and when perpetrated.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the United Kingdom on its presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their briefings, as well as others who spoken today.

Colombia endorses the repeated rejections by the Security Council of all acts of sexual violence and other forms violence against civilians in armed conflict, in particular against women and children. My country deplores the fact that these situations continue to arise in armed conflict in various parts of the world, and believes that the international community should adopt an attitude of strict condemnation and seek, through all means, to abolish violence, ensure the protection of and reparations for victims, and see to it that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Colombia is aware of the impact of sexual violence in conflicts on international peace and security, and believes that we must not lose sight of the fact that the primary responsibility to put an end to that scourge and to protect the victims lies with States. We believe it necessary for international cooperation in this field to be developed and implemented, not just in a constructive way, but also on the basis of an open dialogue with the Governments concerned, so as to ensure that effective solutions are found and that national institutions and processes are strengthened, while respecting States' policies and priorities.

Colombia also joins in the repeated condemnations by the Security Council of violations of international humanitarian law committed against women and girls, and the need to bring to justice those who are responsible for such crimes, in particular the perpetrators of sexual violence against women. We also underscore the importance of enhancing the role of women in peacebuilding and in providing assistance to victims, in particular the victims of sexual violence. It is clear that in order to ensure that those cases are managed properly, information has to be gathered by United Nations agencies on the ground in a timely, precise, reliable and objective way. In that way, the United Nations entities can address each case individually, conduct related criminal investigations, and ensure due process and follow-up, as required.

The resolutions that have been referred to in the framework of this debate call up the Secretary-General to conduct dialogues, "as appropriate", with the parties to armed conflict. Currently, the Government of Colombia is holding a peace dialogue with the spokespersons of an illegal armed group. From the outset, we have believed that the ownership and autonomy of the Government are essential in this process, as an any outside intervention lacking the consent of the Colombian Government would negatively interfere in that process. When we believe support or mediation to be appropriate, we will make that known. Therefore, we are grateful for offers of good offices, and we welcome those voices that support the peace process and the international pressure to put an end to those violent acts and in particular those against women.

Along those lines, it is worth mentioning some of the good practices introduced by Colombia to prevent, investigate and sanction sexual violence in armed conflict. For example, our National Council for Economic and Social Policy has used about $1 million to coordinate all the institutional forces within our country to implement the national public policy for gender equality and the comprehensive plan to ensure a life free of violence for women by implementing the law on reparations for victims.

Strengthening the role and ability of women and promoting the enjoyment and observance of their rights is particularly important to the Government of Colombia. In that regard, the contribution of the United Nations system and the international community is key within a framework of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States. As can be seen and has been underscored by the Secretary-General in his reports, Colombia has different measures and safeguards that mark a decisive step forward in its efforts to comprehensively and consistently address that problem.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile thanks the United Kingdom presidency for convening this important open debate of the Security Council on the topic "Women and peace and security". We support the Security Council's role regarding women and peace and security and the work accomplished by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura. We also support the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Chile attaches great importance to the prevention of sexual violence in conflicts and to the care, protection and compensation of victims of sexual violence in conflict. On earlier occasions we have drawn attention, inter alia, to the progress made by our national legislation on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We particularly support the role being played by the women serving as protection advisers for their work with survivors of acts of sexual violence in places affected by conflicts, and we attach the greatest importance to ending the culture of impunity for sexual violence in conflicts in all its manifestations.

We agree with the Secretary-General's March report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149) that national courts remain primarily responsible for investigating and judging crimes of sexual violence in conflicts, and we value the important complementary role played by the international tribunals in combating crimes of that kind. We attach the greatest importance to the contribution made by resolution 1960 (2010) in that regard, which represented great progress in establishing a political commitment to the prevention and handling of the atrocities of rape in wartime and in establishing the basis for ensuring the accountability of perpetrators.

We also wish to highlight the work of the International Criminal Court. Its Rome Statute includes within the category of war crimes and crimes against humanity crimes involving acts of sexual violence against women and children. We emphasize the contribution made in that connection by the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, with their valuable rulings on the subject.

We wish to express concern, however, about the fact that in several areas it is still difficult to investigate and judge crimes of sexual violence committed against women and children because the national courts lack skills and expertise. That continues to make it difficult to bring perpetrators of such crimes to trial. For that reason, we emphasize the support needed from the United Nations as regards capacity-building in that area.

In recent years, efforts have been made to modernize Chilean institutions to conform to the human rights and gender focus of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on the subject in a forward-looking approach reflecting our national and regional reality. This year we will be launching our national plan based on that resolution, updated for the period 2014-2018, with specific indicators for effectively measuring various types of activity. That, in turn, will be the basis for the next national plan for the period 2019-2022. The indicators represent five specific goals: prevention, participation, protection, help and recovery. They will be implemented globally and jointly, with the aim of creating a strong foundation for combating sexual violence committed in pre-conflict and post-conflict situations.

Although that action concerns the national sphere, we also attach great importance to the enhancement of the international humanitarian response capacity and to the role of international cooperation in achieving those goals, particularly in the context of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. In accordance with the principle of gender equality, Chile has included a female military contingent in the Mission and supports the zero tolerance policy of the United Nations towards cases of sexual abuse and improper conduct in which some members of its contingent have been involved.

In that connection, Chile's national plan provides expanded training in peacekeeping operations for soldiers and for members of the forces of law and order and security in the pre- and post-deployment stages. It also places greater emphasis on the distribution of information on the international instruments concerning gender, security and peace, and we are promoting gender mainstreaming in the institutions performing these roles. We believe that such a policy should be the general norm for all peacekeeping missions in which the United Nations participates.

The subject of women and peace and security and sexual violence poses many challenges and covers a number of areas. I refer in particular to the existence of and access to compensation and justice mechanisms for women and girls, especially in situations of armed conflict; the operation and supervision of compensation systems; and combating impunity for those responsible for crimes.

For that reason, my delegation would like to conclude by expressing our satisfaction with the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) this morning, which Chile co-sponsored.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Marn (Slovenia): I would like to thank all of the briefers in today's debate for their powerful messages, which the Security Council should take into account in its future deliberations. I would also like to thank the United Kingdom for organizing this important and timely debate, while acknowledging their important contribution to combating sexual violence in conflict situations during its tenure leading the Group of Eight. I would also like to commend Australia and Guatemala for organizing an Arria formula meeting on experiences drawn from the work of gender experts in peacekeeping operations. Slovenia joins others in welcoming resolution 2106 (2013) adopted this morning. Slovenia also fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

One of the key priorities of Slovenia in the United Nations is to address issues of importance to women around the world. It has been acknowledged many times that global stability, peace, and prosperity depend on protecting and advancing the rights of women and girls. But many times we find ourselves too late in implementing preventive measures, which may include efforts to promote the rights of women or other means, and find ourselves in the midst of armed conflicts, where particularly vulnerable groups, such as women and children, are disproportionately impacted.

Needless to say, in such circumstances social norms get stripped away and sexual attacks all too often become a weapon of war. Such violence leaves behind hundreds of thousands of victims, all of whom are left traumatized and stigmatized for life. Those hideous acts affect whole communities and remain vividly remembered for generations, as seen in the Western Balkans and Rwanda.

It is therefore of paramount importance to look beyond prevention. The investigation of cases of sexual violence in conflict and the holding of perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict accountable are also of great importance. Ending impunity is pivotal in addressing sexual violence in conflict. Only that can serve as a strong deterrent for such actions. In that regard, we would like to commend the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as Justice Rapid Response, an intergovernmental standby facility of active-duty criminal justice and related professionals.

The International Criminal Court is the only international tribunal whose statute explicitly refers to sexual and gender violence as crimes against humanity. The use of the Court in such cases should be an important aspect of establishing peace and security and the rule of law, whereby special attention should be given to the principle of complementarity and to the issue of closing the legal gaps regarding accountability for the most serious international crimes. However, the most important area of focus must remain the victims.

Let us recall that Slovenia, together with Netherlands and Belgium, presented an initiative aimed at improving the international framework for mutual legal assistance and extradition in cases involving the investigation and prosecution of the most serious crimes of international concern, including sexual and gender violence as crimes against humanity. As suspects, evidence, witnesses and assets related to those crimes are usually not restricted to the territory of any one State, strengthening mutual legal assistance between States is indispensable for States, if they are to be truly effective in the national prosecution and investigation of those crimes.

Finally, let me inform the Council that these pertinent issues will also be on the agenda of the Bled Strategic Forum, a high-level strategic dialogue among leaders from the private and public sectors to be held in Slovenia in early September of 2013. A panel discussion entitled "International criminal justice as a precondition for a prosperous economic future?" will be organized, and it will, inter alia, address the issue of sexual and gender violence, with a particular emphasis on violence against women and children. We see the meeting as an opportunity to continue this important dialogue and also as a sign of my country's continuous involvement in matters that promote women's rights.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands): My delegation welcomes this debate and would like to make a few remarks in addition to the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union, with which my delegation aligns itself, and to others that have underlined the importance of the topic of women and peace and security.

The recent cases of sexual and gender-based violence in countries in conflict such as Syria and Mali continue to illustrate that fighting such violence remains a priority. It is evident that sexual violence exacerbates conflict and perpetuates insecurity. It holds entire communities hostage and has an economic, social, cultural and inter-generational impact. Women are excluded from communities and cannot engage in economic activity or access markets; girls cannot go to school safely.

Sexual and gender-based violence can be seen from two perspectives. On the one hand, we see women as victims of such violence, from the perspective of violence against women. On the other hand, however, we often tend to underestimate the role that women can play in finding solutions through conflict prevention, resolution and transformation — in fact, by using the reverse perspective, of women against violence. That capacity is underutilized, decreasing the effectiveness and likelihood of success of any peace and reconstruction process. The Netherlands recognizes that women play active roles as peacebuilders, politicians, activists and quite often also as combatants. We should listen, therefore, to the priorities that women define, and we should understand the barriers that women perceive. Their participation in finding solutions to conflicts and in reconstruction processes is indispensable.

The Netherlands considers sexual violence in conflict as a sign of a failure to implement all the elements of the agenda for women and peace and security. In today's debate, therefore, we would like to stress four points. First is the importance of taking urgent action in key areas, especially those of women's participation and equality and of prevention, response and accountability. Another important area is national and regional efforts to end impunity, including through referrals to the International Criminal Court, and by emphasizing the importance of reparations.

Secondly, we should give specific attention to the importance of providing effective support and protection to women-led organizations and defenders of women's human rights, particularly given the threats such defenders face and their lack of resources. Thirdly, there is a need for a comprehensive multisectoral response for survivors, including medical care, in accordance with international humanitarian law, and access to emergency contraception, safe abortion and HIV treatment, as well as access to justice and psychosocial health care services for women and girls. Lastly, and equally important, is strengthening the gender components of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, not least through ratification and full compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty, which gives substantive attention to gender dimensions.

Through policies such as its human rights and gender strategies, the Netherlands pays particular attention to issues such as gender equality, women's political role and leadership, economic empowerment and ending trafficking of and violence against women in post-conflict countries and unstable areas. In that regard, we are actively implementing resolution 1325 (2000) through a second national action plan for 2012-2015, signed by three Dutch ministries and 41 civil organizations. The plan focuses on six countries: Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Sudan, Burundi, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as on the Middle East and North Africa region. I will cite three examples.

In Afghanistan, a group of Dutch signatories to the plan are working with a local telephone and Internet provider to start a programme connecting poor rural women and men with more modern young people in large towns via an SMS platform. The objective is keep the rural poor better informed about national women's issues and to foster dialogue between them and urban young people on issues such as violence against women and the role women can play in fighting it.

My second example is that together with the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women's Fund and the Human Rights Fund, the Netherlands supports many women's organizations in their struggle to combat violence against women. When women's political and economic empowerment is supported, their vulnerability to sexual violence is reduced. For example, the Netherlands has funded the Bell Bajao campaign, which combats violence against women with a very successful media effort. Started in India, it consists of small clips that are nested in various popular television talk shows and programmes such as *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. The clips have become very popular and have spread to other countries in the region.

My third example is that in the Middle East and North Africa region we have started, with a Dutch non-governmental organization and an accounting firm, a new fund with a budget of about €5.8 million, designed to strengthen the financial and organizational management of women's organizations in the region.

In conclusion, women can be powerful actors for peace, security, and prosperity. When they participate in peace processes and other formal decision-making processes, they can play an important role in initiating and inspiring progress on human rights, justice, national reconciliation and economic revitalization. They can also build coalitions across ethnic and sectarian lines and speak up for marginalized and minority groups. Investing in women's leadership is therefore smart security as well as smart development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Ms. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Sexual violence is one of the most devastating weapons of war. It wreaks intense destruction on the bodies and souls of the victims. It disrupts families, displaces communities and destroys entire societies' basis for reconciliation. That is why Switzerland would like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for organizing this debate and for making conflict-related sexual violence a priority for both the Security Council and the Group of Eight. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their valuable contributions. We hope that today we can together generate a strong political will that can enable us to improve the implementation of the existing Security Council instruments, strengthen the mechanisms of national and international law and increase assistance to the victims.

In an unprecedented partnership, civil society organizations, the Council and the United Nations as a whole have put in place a visionary framework based on five resolutions on women and peace and security. That framework not only asks us to fight sexual violence effectively in times of conflict, it also commits us to supporting women as active agents for change. The United Nations has developed indicators; the Security Council has created a mandate for a Special Representative and made the decision to establish the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements mechanism. With our partners from Liechtenstein, Switzerland has supported the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, PeaceWomen and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders in making available to Council members a bulletin of monthly action points, a handbook and even an iPhone app, and in ensuring close ties between policymaking levels in New York and the realities on the ground. All these instruments and resources should be utilized in order to implement the framework based on resolution 1325 (2000) without further delay. We therefore gratefully welcome today's resolution 2106 (2013), which will support those efforts.

First and foremost, however, prevention is essential. We must break the cycles of violence. All parties to a conflict must make specific commitments to combat sexual violence and hold perpetrators accountable. I would also like to voice a particularly serious concern about the fact that the risk of systematic sexual violence often increases considerably after or around high-level visits. It is therefore imperative to ensure careful follow-up and to prevent acts of revenge by strengthening local capacities.

In his latest report (S/2013/149) the Secretary-General encourages Member States to include specific training courses for their peacekeeping troops. Nevertheless, our methods have not been sufficiently successful in fighting these crimes. That scourge continues to undermine the credibility of United Nations peacekeeping missions — not to mention the immense harm done to the individuals and communities affected by the behaviour of those who were deployed in the field to protect them and ensure peace. The zero-tolerance policy must be urgently implemented, and everyone must be resolutely committed to bringing perpetrators to justice.

International humanitarian law prohibits rape and other forms of sexual violence. Such crimes can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide. International tribunals, especially the International Criminal Court, play a key role in punishing and preventing such crimes. For that reason, it is crucial that all States lend their full support to those institutions, not forgetting that the fight against impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence must primarily be carried out at the national level.

Let us never forget that the very raison d'être of the United Nations, as set out in its visionary Charter, is the abolition of war and all related crimes. As John Lennon sang,

(*spoke in English*)

> "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one".

(*spoke in French*)

All around the world, men and women, communities, civil society organizations, United Nations staff and representatives and country representatives are working hard to prevent and abolish war. Switzerland is steadfastly committed to joining in those efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to take the floor.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada wishes to thank the United Kingdom for holding this open debate on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, an issue of great importance to our country, as it includes the despicable acts of rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity. Those acts are deplorable, prohibited by international law, and constitute an impediment to conflict resolution, development and transition to peace and democracy.

Canada, which is a proud member and Chair of the Group of Friends against Sexual Violence in Conflict, recognizes that women's social, political and economic empowerment, their equality with men and the active participation of men and boys in combating all forms of violence against women are central to long-term prevention efforts. Preventing sexual violence requires promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls. Prevention also requires supporting survivors on their path to recovery from such crimes, assisting their access to justice and holding perpetrators to account.

(*spoke in French*)

The Security Council and the United Nations system should act systematically and comprehensively to address gaps and challenges in its work on women, peace and security, as well as to monitor the commitments by parties to conflict to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) details the global scope of conflict-related sexual violence, including many instances of early and forced marriage of women and girls. Canada is gravely concerned about reports of forced marriage, rape and sexual slavery and condemns the early and forced marriage of women and girls in all situations, including the practice of forcing rape survivors to marry their perpetrators or other family members. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to focus attention on the practice of early and forced marriage in the context of armed conflict.

(*spoke in English*)

The primary responsibility for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict lies with national Governments as well as with the leadership of non-State armed groups. Where those leaders fail to respond to sexual violence or are party to the crimes, they must be held to account. Often, however, Governments lack the capacity to respond adequately.

Conflict significantly weakens national justice systems, resulting in a limited number of perpetrators facing justice. In such cases, Member States could request the assistance of trained experts for investigations and prosecutions and to strengthen the capacity of local law enforcement.

Canada welcomes the engagement of the Security Council on the issue of preventing sexual violence. We urge the Council to ensure the inclusion of prevention and response to sexual violence in its mandates and resolutions and to ensure that those elements are implemented. The Council should take concrete measures to support women's opportunities for equal participation and decision-making in all conflict-prevention and -resolution processes. It must ensure the health, safety, human rights and dignity of survivors and should hold perpetrators to full account.

In that regard, Canada calls on the Council to ensure that Sanctions Committees add criteria pertaining to acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence to their existing criteria. Further action at the international level is imperative to end sexual violence in conflict, to tackle the lack of accountability that exists for those crimes and to provide comprehensive support services to survivors. For its part, Canada is active in the prevention and response to sexual violence in conflict. For example, Canada is contributing $18.5 million to the United Nations Development Programme to support the fight against sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, at the London launch of the Group of Eight declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict, Canada announced an additional $5 million contribution to international efforts to be programmed this year.

Canada urges all Member States to join the international effort and we look forward to working together to stop sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal.

Mr. Diallo (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having organizing this open debate on preventing sexual violence in conflict — an issue that is affecting civilians more frequently, particularly women.

At the outset, I would express my appreciation at seeing you, Sir, preside over the work of the Security Council in June. Your presidency reflects the commitment of your country in supporting peace throughout the world. Allow me also to pay heartfelt tribute to the leadership of your predecessor, Ambassador Kodjo Menan of Togo. I also warmly thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her excellent briefing. We also encourage her tireless efforts in continuing the work of her predecessor, Ms. Margot Wallström.

Armed groups have always used pressure tactics of rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery against populations, especially women, to impose control over their communities. Those horrendous practices have also been used to force populations to move, which has led to unbearable humanitarian situations in neighbouring countries.

In that context, I express my condemnation of the new trend of using sexual violence in order to gain illegal access to natural resources. Beyond undermining morale and trampling the dignity of the people who are the victims, those crimes also seriously undermine the development efforts of countries already suffering the effects of poverty.

As timely highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2013/149), the failure of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform efforts in many countries has led, as we know, to violations against women. In addition, there is a risk of reprisals against the victims of sexual violence.

Only a strong message, backed up by a holistic strategy on the part of the international community, will lead to the control of that phenomenon, which entails such disastrous consequences for maternal and child health, populations, international peace and security as well as for our people's well-being.

That leads me to welcome resolution 2106 (2013), which the Council has just adopted and which places victims at the heart of efforts to combat sexual violence and to improve conflict resolution. On that basis, efforts to combat this scourge should be based on adequate prevention as well as on accountability, which helps to dissuade people from committing these crimes once again. Prevention is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments, particularly of security forces, which have a duty to protect their own citizens. We need to support the countries affected in establishing the rule of law by enhancing the capacity of the security forces in a substantive way and by developing their legal capacities. The basic goal is to fill the gaps in terms of their protection and judicial mechanisms, particularly in the spheres of intelligence, investigations and prosecution of perpetrators. In that regard, we are happy to see the significant progress achieved by various countries thanks to the United Nations campaign on sexual violence in conflict, which includes "firewood patrols" in Darfur and an early-warning system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Moreover, it is important to underscore the fact that the prevention effort is also a collective one, as it transcends borders and deals with a phenomenon that poses a serious threat to peace and security throughout the world. Worse yet, acts of sexual violence constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of genocide, in line with the decision handed down by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in the *Jean-Paul Akayesu* case.

This shows the importance of taking into account sexual violence in the context of preventive diplomacy, particularly when ceasefire agreements are reached between warring parties. In that connection, I support the recommendations made by the Secretary-General to establish monitoring mechanisms for the commitments entered into by parties during the good offices process, in line with resolution 1960 (2010). That also applies to peacekeeping missions and to special political missions, which should have a sufficient number of women's protection advisers.

Combating impunity at the international level continues to be a major pillar, indeed an indispensable one, in combating sexual violence. Those who tolerate or perpetuate these serious and unacceptable crimes must be held accountable for their acts. In that regard, the International Criminal Court must, in accordance with the principle of complimentarity with national jurisdictions, play a leading role in administering justice for the benefit of the many victims of sexual abuse in conflict. In that connection, I would like to pay tribute to the Group of Eight agreement on sexual violence in conflict, which reflects the Group's commitment in the light of this serious phenomenon.

I would like to encourage the Council to adopt a holistic approach in combating sexual violence, as well as to reiterat the unfailing determination of my country to protect future generations from this longstanding legacy.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Shaanika (Namibia): I would like to thank the United Kingdom, Mr. President, for scheduling this important debate. I would also to thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, Ms. Angela Joli and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar for their illuminating introductory presentations on sexual violence in conflict. Their presentations, together with the concept paper you circulated, Mr. President (S/2013/335, annex), has undoubtedly guided our deliberations today.

Sexual violence, wherever it is committed, is a crime against humanity. When committed in conflict situations, it is more than a double-edged sword for the victim. As highlighted in the concept note, this not only affects a large number of women and girls, but also men and boys. Without downplaying the impact of sexual violence on men and boys, women and girls are often more disproportionately affected because the impact of such acts and the consequences with which they have to live are often much more severe than for men and boys. However, no human being should be subjected to such a heinous and disgraceful crime. It is a pure manifestation of evil that cannot be justified or tolerated in the twenty-first century.

In conflict situations, the dignity of women and girls must be respected; they cannot be treated as subhuman. First, they are human beings endowed with the right to pursue happiness in every possible way. Secondly, they are grandmothers, mothers, wives, sisters and little girls in the eyes of their parents and in their communities in general. In conflict situations too, the family bond remains and it must be accorded adequate protection.

My country has made its modest contribution to the issue of women in peace. During Namibia's presidency of the Council in October 2000, a discussion was initiated and an open debate held (see S/PV.4213) that culminated in the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). The Council has also adopted resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), which highlight the seriousness of sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security. The urgent question confronting the international community today is, what are the appropriate strategies to end sexual violence in conflict?

The international justice mechanism should support the restoration or establishment of justice and accountability at the national level. The empowerment of women and girls, as well as the education of boys about the rights of girls and women, are some of important elements that instil nurturing and responsible behavioural patterns. We welcome the call by the Group of Eight for urgent action to address impunity and to hold perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflicts accountable. There can be no sympathy for any person or group of persons who commit sexual violence anywhere. My delegation acknowledges the important role that the Council plays by encouraging the development of joint Government-United Nations comprehensive strategies on combating sexual violence.

We encourage the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to work with Governments and armed groups to seek their commitment to becoming accountable in the quest to prevent sexual violence. We also support the proposal to deploy women's protection advisers to United Missions missions, as well as to address sexual violence in the context of security sector reform. Furthermore, my delegation supports the establishment of a mechanism to monitor commitments by parties to a conflict, including issuing clear orders through the chains of command and enacting codes of conduct prohibiting sexual violence. Those who have been identified and proved beyond a reasonable doubt to have perpetrated or condoned acts of sexual violence should in future be excluded from any security institutions, or from holding positions of influence. Specific measures to impose targeted sanctions on those committing or condoning sexual violence should be taken against the perpetrators. When the use of legal mechanisms are insufficient to fight against sexual violence in the quest for justice, reforms in the administration of justice and the legislative process may become necessary.

While this debate is mainly addressing issues of sexual violence, we must also focus our attention beyond the realm of conflict periods. However, we are concerned about the continued low representation of women in all structures and phases of the peacebuilding processes. In spite of the disproportionate impact of conflict on women, they continue to hold their families and communities together, often undertaking initiatives between warring factions under extremely difficult conditions. When included in formal peace processes, they bring their experiences to bear on the parties. It is therefore imperative that they be included at all peacebuilding levels.

It is unfortunate that, more often than not, the efforts of women are insufficiently recognized and supported, both politically and financially. As a result, women's rights are rarely integrated into peace agreements or post-conflict support structures.

In conclusion, my delegation urges the Security Council to act expeditiously on the information presented to it. The paramount consideration should be that more needs to be done to protect women and girls and men and boys from the scourge of sexual violence. I support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important open debate on sexual violence in conflict in the broader context of the discourse on women and peace and security. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the other briefers who made remarks this morning.

The resolution of conflict situations requires the adoption of a sustainable and holistic approach to conflict resolution and the overall reconstruction of impacted societies. In our view, gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to the pursuit of this objective. The participation of women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction efforts is imperative for laying the foundation for durable peace. Economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy cannot be achieved without the active engagement of women.

Thirteen years ago, resolution 1325 (2000) highlighted the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and children, and the need for effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and the full participation of women in peace processes. That resolution also contained several detailed recommendations on how to deal with various aspects of this issue.

As reports made to the Security Council since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted show, we have not made enough progress on implementing its recommendations. Take, for example, the peacekeeping operations mandated by the Security Council. As one of the major contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations for over six decades, India and its peacekeepers serving under the blue flag have also had to deal with this pernicious problem under challenging circumstances. Based on our experience on the ground, we are of the view that the Security Council must make available the resources required to implement the expanded scope of peacekeeping mandates. Specifically, we require greater commitment to the deployment of women's protection advisers in peacekeeping operations.

In resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council called for greater participation by women in the field-based operations of the United Nations in terms of the deployment of police personnel. We are proud of the fact that India was the first State Member of the United Nations to successfully deploy an all-woman police force as part of the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Liberia, where sexual violence had been one of the hallmarks of the conflict. Apart from the effectiveness of the force, which has been acknowledged by many, we believe that the functioning of such an all-woman force has also sent a strong deterrent message to those who indulge in the egregious crime of sexual violence in conflict. By deploying women to deal with conflict situations, we have demonstrated that we can push forward the goal of empowering women to deal with the crime of sexual violence in conflict and play a major role in the post-conflict reconstruction of traumatized societies. We hope that this example will encourage others to follow suit.

In earlier debates, India drew the attention of the Security Council to the impact of so-called militia groups on the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. As the reports made to the Council since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) show, that impact has been felt especially in crimes of sexual violence in conflict situations where peacekeeping mandates are in force.

It is in that context that we take the view that national Governments have the primary responsibility for prosecuting and deterring such crimes in conflict situations on their territories, even if these are alleged to have been committed by so-called militia groups. We believe that national Governments should be assisted by the United Nations in augmenting their capacities to deal with this issue. That would play a vital role in ensuring better governance and the stabilization of post-conflict situations. The United Nations should focus its efforts in this area.

We would like to reiterate our principled position that debates such as that of today in the Security Council should focus on issues related to mandates specifically given by the Council. We would urge caution in going beyond such mandates in reports submitted to the Council, which can only serve to blur the focus of the Council and which contain the potential to divert much-needed resources away from the task at hand. It is critical, therefore, that such reports remain focused on the situations of armed conflict that are on the agenda of the Council, and not stray into so-called "situations of concern" on the basis of sweeping generalizations.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reaffirm India's commitment to positively contribute to our collective efforts to tackle the crime of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, in the overall framework of the work of the United Nations on peacebuilding and the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate of the Security Council. I also wish to thank the speakers for their important and passionate statements, as well as to reiterate Italy's full support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Italy welcomes the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), regarding sexual violence in conflict, which signals the commitment of the Council to address an issue that is key to international peace and security.

While Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, I wish to make the following additional remarks in my national capacity.

We appreciate the focus of this debate on impunity for crimes of sexual violence. Impunity makes those responsible for crimes confident enough to use sexual violence as a tactic of war. Impunity takes away any hope for justice from victims and survivors. Impunity is a stumbling block in rebuilding peaceful societies after conflicts. In order to make a full contribution to our discussion, I will focus on six specific points.

First, it is important that the Council be provided with timely and accurate information. Regular briefings to the Security Council by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and by UN-Women; enhancing the United Nations monitoring, analysis and reporting mechanism; and the systematic inclusion of women's protection advisers on peacekeeping and political missions could strengthen the capacity of the Council to effectively respond to impunity.

Secondly, there must be strict implementation of zero-tolerance policies towards sexual misconduct by peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding personnel. Those actors are the face of the United Nations for the people who are plagued by conflict. They must ensure the highest standards of respect for human rights and humanitarian law and be accountable for their violation.

Thirdly, sexual violence should be addressed in peace agreements. Sexual violence should be included in the definition of acts prohibited by ceasefires. The principle of no amnesty for the perpetrators for crimes of sexual violence should always be respected. The participation of women in peace negotiations and ceasefires are the best way to ensure that these issues are not traded off for other agendas.

Fourthly, national authorities should be supported in their efforts to fight against impunity. Governments have the primary responsibility to protect their populations from sexual violence and to ensure that justice is done. The international community must stand ready to provide technical assistance and capacity-building, and to help strengthen the rule of law. The United Nations has a key role to play, as proven by the work done by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. Peacekeepers shouldd be trained and tasked with investigating crimes of sexual violence. Cooperation with civil society organizations, particularly those led by women, is also essential.

Fifthly, cooperation should be enhanced between the Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC), in particular when dealing with cases of sexual violence. The perpetrators of large-scale sexual violence should never benefit from differences of opinion within the Council on a specific situation. Well-documented crimes should act as a clear basis for fast-track referrals by the Council to the ICC.

Sixthly, and lastly, comprehensive strategies are needed. While we are thoroughly committed to bringing to justice the perpetrators of sexual violence, we must give equal priority to the health, safety and the dignity of survivors. National and international programmes for post-conflict reconstruction must ensure that the needs of victims are met and their voices heard. All forms of reparation and redress must follow a victim-centred approach.

Italy has placed a high priority on the protection of women against sexual violence in its human rights policy. Last week, the Italian Parliament ratified the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. We strongly encourage States to ratify this important instrument. Moreover, the Italian national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) includes specific provisions addressing sexual violence in conflict.

Finally, Italy will enhance its support for the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which is the global grant-making mechanism dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls in all of its forms, including sexual violence.

To conclude, today we must all send a strong message to the perpetrators of sexual violence. They must know that sexual violence is not cost-free. The more seriously we endeavour to make this message a reality, the closer we will come to finally relegating rape in war to history books.

The President: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I would like to remind all speakers to follow the example of Italy and limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. The presidency will cut off those delegations that speak for significantly more than four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mrs. Andelić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for organizing this important debate, and we welcome the valuable contribution of the Honourable Foreign Secretary, Mr. Hague. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, who visited Bosnia and Herzegovina recently, as well as Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar from the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice for their statements.

Violence against women is certainly the most brutal manifestation of discrimination, and we are fully committed to addressing all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. The protection of women in conflict situations and ending impunity remain our utmost priorities. Sexual violence in armed conflict represents one of the most serious forms of the violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Furthermore, impunity for sexual violence in conflict is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. Therefore, we advocate recognition of the importance of women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings. We also believe that more has to be done to address these ongoing crimes, including by permanent opposition to the traditional account that sexual violence in armed conflict is a cultural phenomenon, an unavoidable consequence of war or a less important crime.

Bearing all this in mind, we fully support the work of the United Nations in addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly the mandates of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and we continue to closely cooperate with them. We acknowledge their active advocacy efforts, inter alia with Governments, in order to address these horrible crimes.

The Security Council's recognition of this matter as a serious concern for international peace and security is of great importance for building a solid framework for preventing and addressing this gruesome tactic of war. Therefore, the Council has a significant role to play, in accordance with the relevant resolutions, particularly in emphasizing the importance of national and international authorities strengthening the rule of law response. All appropriate mechanisms and procedures for monitoring commitments by parties in conflict should be supported by the Council. Also, United Nations officials should be more engaged in dialogue with States and other stakeholders who may exert influence to elicit such commitments.

At this point, I would like to elaborate on the achievements of my country in this regard.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to promoting the role of women in peace and security through the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions. To illustrate our genuine commitment in this regard, we need to point out that Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first country in South-East Europe to adopt an action plan aimed at implementation of the aforementioned resolution. The plan was used as sample document for other countries of the region that drafted similar action plans. In addition, my country has also adopted a gender action plan and enacted laws regulating the prevention of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Involving women in conflict prevention and mediation and deploying women's protection advisers to United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions is crucial to building and reinforcing peace. We believe that women should play a greater role as legitimate partners in international and national efforts to maintain peace and security, which is fundamental for more effective performance on the ground. Recruiting women in the civil, military and police components of peacekeeping missions can encourage local women to report incidents of sexual violence and contribute to establishing better communication with local communities. We spare no effort in advancing this issue and, as result of our commitment the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have adopted a policy that one-third of candidates nominated for peacekeeping missions must be women.

We are aware of the fact that national Governments bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for the protection of civilian populations. In this regard, and with the aim of improving the overall situation of women who are victims of rape, we are undertaking efforts to finalize the drafting of a document entitled "Programme for victims of rape, sexual abuse and torture in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2013-2016", which will seek to improve the position of all victims. One of the goals of the programme emphasizes the obligation of the State to provide access to reparations programmes for victims of war and the need to provide legal and psychological support to victims and/or witnesses in court proceedings and after them.

We recognize the positive steps in holding perpetrators to account at all levels. However, we believe that greater efforts need to be undertaken in this regard, including through the work of the International Criminal Court, the ad hoc tribunals and the national tribunals.

Finally, we would like to point out that the international community must continue to work on strengthening United Nations efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict, and Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to contribute to those efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to thank you for convening this open debate on the important issue of women and peace and security. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, for their invaluable briefings on the issue.

Malaysia is deeply concerned about the effect of sexual violence — the physical, psychological and emotional terror and trauma that it creates for women and girls. We strongly condemn acts of sexual violence against women and girls and underline the need for a deeper examination of the emerging incidence of sexual violence perpetrated against male victims and the plight of children born as a result of rape and the practice of forced marriages by armed groups.

Without a doubt, ending impunity is critical in ending sexual violence, whether it is committed by individuals, groups or States. Nonetheless, Member States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for the protection of their civilian populations. Malaysia therefore welcomes the continuous work of the United Nations and other stakeholders, including the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which focuses its efforts on strengthening the capacity of national rule of law and justice actors. We feel that its engagement with relevant Governments will strengthen the latter's capacity to effectively address sexual violence against women and girls.

In our effort to secure peace and security, we must move urgently to replace the prevailing culture of impunity with one of deterrence that promotes the need for the rule of law, justice and accountability. Malaysia views accountability as a duty of Member States under both domestic and international law. The national system in that regard should be steered towards meeting international standards in ensuring accountability and justice. The perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence should never go unpunished.

Malaysia believes that the equal, full and active participation of women is key to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. My delegation is of the view that women should not just be seen as victims, but as central to all efforts to end this global phenomenon. It is crucial to bring women into peace processes. They must be active participants in all efforts to combat this horrific phenomenon.

We consider the routine deployment of women's protection advisers as crucial in addressing sexual violence. At present, only eight such advisers have been deployed in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan. It is therefore encouraging to learn that more are being recruited for the United Nations missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic. Malaysia supports appointing more women's protection advisers, as the positive value they bring in creating greater awareness about sexual violence issues, reporting incidents of sexual violence and implementing Security Council resolutions on the ground cannot be overstated.

In that context, we welcome today's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) on the issue discussed. My delegation hopes that there will be sufficient impetus for the actual realization of the relevant resolutions, including the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), to increase women's participation in the area of peace and security. We should also seriously consider appointing more women to senior positions in United Nations missions, lest we be accused of ignoring experienced and potential women leaders in the security and defence sectors.

Malaysia reaffirms its strong commitment to the efforts to address sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. We strongly believe that the subject of women and peace and security deserves the Security Council's sustained attention. In that regard, the Council can be assured of our continuous engagement and unrelenting support for the advancement of the issue in our pursuit of achieving peace and security at the national, regional and international levels.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vrailas: I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. Croatia, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine and Georgia align themselves with this statement, the full version of which is being circulated in the Chamber.

I thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the representative on Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice and the Special Envoy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their statements delivered earlier today.

Today's debate addresses the root cause of recurring and pervasive sexual violence in conflict — the often predominant culture of impunity that allows these crimes to go unrecorded, unpunished and, at worst, tolerated by the community. We cannot combat sexual violence and ensure effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding without tackling this gap at all levels. Such actions must include the following.

With regard to ensuring adequate information, fact-finding and documentation, sexual violence in conflict remains universally underreported. Inter alia, that is the result of the threats faced by those who come forward to report this crime. We reiterate the need to take all measures for the protection of survivors, human rights defenders and journalists, who contribute to collecting information on sexual violence.

With regard to ensuring the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence and punishing perpetrators of crimes against women and girls under national and international law, we emphasize the significant advancement in international law made by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which includes sexual violence in the definition of crimes, in particular as a crime against humanity, and note that the ICC, as well as the non-permanent International Criminal Tribunals, continue to be important mechanisms in combating sexual violence in conflict. We furthermore acknowledge the national efforts to implement the Rome Statute. The crimes of sexual violence must be excluded from amnesty provisions in conflict-resolution processes. We support the continued application of targeted and graduated measures by the relevant Security Council Sanctions Committees aimed at perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, as well as other measures at its disposal including referrals to the ICC and steps towards the systematic monitoring of commitments by parties to conflict under resolution 1960 (2010).

With regard to ensuring women's leadership and the participation of women in peace processes and conflict resolution, those processes should also recognize explicitly the need to address crimes of sexual violence, as they lay the foundation for future institution-building and political and legal reforms.

There is a need to ensure the availability of reparations as a form of transitional gender justice, as well as accessible services, including health, education, psychosocial, legal and economic support.

We must raise awareness and combat the normalization of sexual violence, including beyond the end of the conflict, to counter stigmatization, shame and fear of social exclusion, which perpetuate the underreporting of sexual violence. We continue to underline the importance of the continued deployment of women's and child protection advisers.

The European Union continues to implement its dedicated policy on women and peace and security, as well as to support initiatives to strengthen international criminal justice and the rule of law. The EU now has gender advisers and/or human rights focal points in each of its crisis management missions and operations. The EU supports the swift deployment of human rights observers in Mali by the African Union and the United Nations and provides financial support for the deployment of observers. The EU training mission in Mali includes training on gender and human rights for the Malian armed forces.

We continue to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/335) and the recommendations contained therein. We also welcome the Council's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) today as an expression of the Council's continued determination to keep this issue under close scrutiny.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): I want to thank the United Kingdom for its leadership on this important issue. We were pleased to sponsor resolution 2106 (2013).

Ireland aligns itself with the statement just made by the observer of the European Union.

Significant progress has been made across the women and peace and security agenda, with a steady spotlight now being shone on rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict. But progress has been uneven and inadequate.

The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2013/335) makes a series of further useful recommendations, but we are disappointed to see little evidence of progress regarding the very first recommendation, that is, that the Security Council should identify ways to target suspected perpetrators with sanctions and other measures in countries where no sanctions regime applies. Council members should also ask themselves whether the maximum pressure possible is being applied to the 32 parties named and shamed in the annex to the Secretary-General's March report (S/2013/149).

Despite the broad range of activities and efforts under way, the scourge of sexual violence remains pervasive in many conflict and post-conflict situations. How does impunity for those crimes persist? What explains the reluctance to take decisive action to address that impunity — to send a definitive signal that sexual violence will no longer be tolerated?

The Secretary-General and Special Representative Bangura have long emphasized that a radical challenge to impunity can only be delivered at the national level. The real imperative in that regard is the assumption by national political leaders of ownership of this agenda.

While there has been a welcome shift towards acknowledging conflict-related sexual violence as an issue of peace and security, rather than viewing it simply as a women's issue, it is undeniable that sexual violence touches women and affects women far more profoundly than men. It is therefore appropriate that women take the lead in driving the necessary national political change.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, which might be considered the cockpit of conflict-related sexual violence, is a case in point. On 4 June, the Permanent Mission of Ireland convened a high-level panel discussion on women and peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region. A report on the event is available on our website. At the event, Special Envoy Mary Robinson explored the opportunities provided by the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. In particular, she highlighted the importance of bringing together women civil society leaders as part of a regional platform for peace. At the panel discussion, Special Representative Bangura described the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework as a new opportunity to tap into the vast potential that is African women. Lina Zedriga, a civil society leader for Uganda, offered powerful personal testimony and called for women to be given the opportunity to speak for themselves, saying "We are not victims; we are stakeholders".

In support of Mary Robinson, Lina Zedriga and women's leaders like her from the region intend to join forces to change the national political calculus. They aim to encourage and pressure national political leaders to take ownership of the issue of sexual violence and to implement the full range of commitments they have made under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. To help kick-start the process of engaging women, Ireland is pleased to co-fund an event in Bujumbura next month organized by Femmes Africa Solidarité.

While the greatest potential for change lies at the national level, we must all assume more responsibility and do so with a keener sense of urgency. For our part, Ireland recently published an independent mid-term progress report on implementation of our national action plan, based on resolution 1325 (2000). We are one of a very small number of countries to publicly share the lessons we have identified — where we have done well and where we need to improve. We hope that other States will benefit from the report, which is available on our website. We will focus, too, on preventing and responding to gender-based violence in the immediate aftermath of humanitarian emergencies, including through a roundtable on 28 June in Brussels that Ireland, as current President of the Council of the European Union, will co-host.

As Zainab Bangura pointed out, it is still largely cost-free to rape a woman, child or man in conflict, and sexual violence is used so widely precisely because it is "such a cheap and devastating weapon". Although there are many worthwhile initiatives being pursued to combat sexual violence, they are not enough.

At the Security Council debate last week (S/PV.6980), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict announced the launch of a campaign to galvanize concerned Governments, interested Member States and the United Nations system to end the recruitment and use of children by State forces in armed conflict by 2016. Do we dare to challenge ourselves in a similar fashion and to raise the level of our ambition?

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Chullikatt: At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, and the United Kingdom delegation on presiding over the work of the Security Council this month. Today's discussion provides a welcome opportunity for the wider membership to collaborate on the means to end the ongoing proliferation of sexual violence.

The Holy See, while operating within the family of nations, constantly strives to promote peace, security and the rule of law as a base for enhancing development, freedom and the dignity of all peoples and each person, from conception to natural death. While firmly opposing recourse to armed conflict as a means of resolving international or national disputes, the Holy See recognizes the tragic and sad evidence that, in many parts of the world, war is still an appalling reality.

The international community as a whole and this body in particular have a grave responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and, where conflict occurs, finding the means for restoring a peace based on justice and solidarity.

Within that framework, the Holy See appreciates the Security Council's commitment to enhancing international awareness of — and the resolve to address — the victimization of women and girls, as well as men and boys, by the heinous acts of sexual violence so often found in situations of armed conflict. A just response to sexual violence must be motivated not by revenge, which would simply perpetuate a chain of hatred, but must rather seek to build the common good. That responsibility demands that perpetrators be held accountable for their actions in order to deter future violence, while at the same time repairing the damage done to victims and the community as a whole by providing the necessary reparations, support and care, in recognition of their human dignity and worth.

A truly human-centred approach to providing assistance to victims and their communities includes respect for life at all stages of development. In that regard, we regret that resolution 2106 (2013), adopted today, bypasses that noble concept and instead seeks to promote a potentially destructive notion of health care under the banner of sexual and reproductive health, which too often is used as a justification for taking life rather than upholding it. The death of innocent unborn children only visits further violence on women already in difficulty.

Through its institutions, particularly female religious institutions, the Catholic Church is firmly committed to compassionate outreach to victims, to alleviating their sufferings and accompanying them as far as possible on the way to recovery and rehabilitation, and to resuming their own lives in freedom and dignity. We hope that future discussions of the issue will remain focused on the topic under discussion in a holistic manner, rather than being diverted towards promoting political or ideological agendas that serve only to harm human dignity and are already under discussion in other United Nations forums.

Secondly, respect for the rights of victims and offenders requires that penal processes be guided by a meticulous search for truth and conducted in a timely manner. Those accused must be able to defend themselves, and judges given the independence necessary to enable them to avoid ruling for reasons other than justice itself. Public pronouncements of guilt by the media or political groups, at the national or international level, before tribunals reach their decisions, can seriously hamper our collective efforts to combat the scourge of sexual violence.

Thirdly, in recognition of the principle of complementarity, international tribunals must support the role of national systems as the primary authority in holding individuals accountable. To that end, States must be provided with the necessary technical and legislative resources for addressing sexual violence in conflict settings and for upholding humanitarian law and internationally agreed human rights standards. Such respect for national authorities helps to restore trust in national and local judicial systems and enables victims and affected communities to participate more fully. It is only when such national systems prove unable or unwilling to shoulder their responsibility to defend innocent victims and the common good that the international community has an obligation to intervene to protect victims and safeguard human dignity.

That obligation does not fall on States alone; international organizations such as the United Nations must also adhere to it. This is particularly important in the area of peacekeeping operations, so that those sent to protect people from violence do not become a source of it themselves. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the measures outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" (A/65/742).

I would like to thank you once again, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and focusing our discussion on such an important topic.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Solomon Islands.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): I would like to thank the United Kingdom for its ongoing leadership on the issue of women and peace and security. I also commend you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate of the Council on sexual violence in conflict.

The Solomon Islands agrees that sexual violence is widespread in conflicts and is often used as a tool to deliberately humiliate opponents. A number of Council resolutions speak to that, particularly resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), as well as resolution 1325 (2000). It is also correct to say that the vast majority of victims and survivors of sexual violence do not see justice come their way.

Turning to the purposes of this debate — to examine the mechanisms and processes by which countries have dealt with the victims and survivors of sexual violence — I would like to share some of the experience of the Solomon Islands in dealing with victims of sexual violence during and after a period of conflict. The Solomon Islands went through an ethnic conflict between 1998 and 2000. In 2009, with the support of the United Nations, and particularly of Australia, currently a member of the Security Council, the Solomon Islands established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission provided a mechanism for the victims' stories to be heard and for efforts to be made to restore the dignity of survivors of that ethnic conflict, including those who had been sexually violated, with the Commission listening in compassion and respect and providing a space for expression in a traditional society where shame and humiliation often prevent victims from coming forward. The Commission, established by law in the Solomon Islands, has since presented its findings and recommendations to my Government.

Secondly, while primary responsibility in this area lies with States, I would like to underscore that in 2003, at the invitation of the Government of the Solomon Islands, a regional assistance mission, as provided for under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, and led by Australia and strongly supported by New Zealand and all the Pacific small island developing States, was deployed to the Solomon Islands. The mission, which included military, police and civilian components, undertook peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking initiatives. One of its roles was to strengthen the country's security apparatus and address gaps in the system, including regional support for strengthening the rule of law, such as institutional training of police and corrections officers and building court infrastructure and police stations all over the country. That support has enabled the Solomon Islands to conduct a strong campaign aimed at protecting victims and dealing with perpetrators of gender violence, while working with all the relevant stakeholders. We have a policy in place and are now holding consultations on a draft bill on gender violence that we hope will address our high rates of gender violence.

I would like to say that the regional assistance mission is now in a transitional phase. After 10 years of its regional partnership with a post-conflict country such as ours, our economy has grown and stability has been maintained. The mission's military component will be withdrawn this year. The regional Pacific police force will shift into more of an advisory role, and other components of the partnership will slowly be absorbed into bilateral assistance with various partners.

The role of UN-Women in combating sexual violence remains important, but its task in the Pacific is challenging. It has one inter-country office managing 13 countries. We continue to push for it to establish itself in more countries in the region.

Finally, to answer the question posed in the concept paper (S/2013/335, annex) — yes, the Solomon Islands and the Pacific have a story to tell and a model that tries to address the issue of sexual violence comprehensively through regional cooperation. I would like to close by stating that sustainable peace and stability can be achieved only through embracing all three pillars of sustainable development, and by addressing the security threats connected to climate change by calling for stronger mitigation targets to avoid the possibility that the world will reach a point of no return. Failing that, the threats we see today will continue to increase as States' capacity to respond will become more challenging.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to thank the United Kingdom delegation, especially His Excellency Mr. William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, for presiding over this meeting. It is an important opportunity to strengthen the Council's efforts on sexual violence in conflict situations, and to highlight the challenges faced by States in conflict and post-conflict situations in addressing that crime.

I also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their valuable briefings and their eagerness to participate in the meeting.

The latest report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Sexual violence in conflict" (S/2013/149), contains many recommendations and significant information. In the report, he stresses that the lack of adequate national capacity and expertise to investigate and prosecute acts of sexual violence has remained one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability for related crimes. He also indicates that Member States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence, and reiterates the need for national ownership, leadership and responsibility in that context.

We cannot consider the issue of women, peace and security without addressing the root causes of their suffering and insecurity. Consequently, improving women's protection is not merely a humanitarian task, but one that requires focused efforts in several areas — first and foremost, the enforcement of the laws necessary to protect them in armed conflict, without discrimination or selectivity, and calling upon all parties to the conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence during the conflict.

In that context, I reiterate the importance of ensuring access to health care, social support services and justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict-affected areas. I also note the importance of strengthening cooperation among humanitarian actors, exchanging experiences and lessons learned, as well as initiatives to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

It is sad that today, even as we speak, many people in various countries of the world are being subjected to acts of sexual violence. In those countries, ongoing conflict has led to the displacement of populations and to increased security risks faced by refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), including the risk of sexual violence. It is clear that our Arab region is not immune to the dangers posed by armed conflict and its devastating effects on civilians, irrespective of their social group or whether they are men, women or children.

We are deeply concerned by acts of violence that include kidnapping, rape and sexual violence in the context of armed conflict. Women bear the brunt of such acts, which constitute human rights violations. In our Arab region, as one of the most prominent examples of this phenomenon is that women in the sisterly country of Syria, who have not been spared by the brutal onslaught being waged against the Syrian people by their own regime, which has adopted a repressive military solution in addressing the demands of the people.

In that context, women constitute the majority of Syrian IDPs and refugees. The regime's officials, security apparatus, loyalists and thugs subject them to discrimination, physical and sexual assault, violations of their right to privacy, arbitrary arrest and detention as a means of forcing their male relatives to turn themselves in. Such acts amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity and their perpetrators must be held accountable. The Secretary-General stresses in his report that in Syria, such acts constitute the main reasons why women and girls have fled conflict-affected cities, including the high level of insecurity and access constraints.

I reiterate the State of Qatar's support for all efforts aimed at strengthening the rule of law and preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict situations. I also stress the importance of continuing to fight the impunity that hampers access by victims of such crimes to justice, security and safety. To be sure, the prosecution and trial of the perpetrators of sexual violence are key steps contributing to strengthened efforts to prevent sexual violence and protect women and girls.

In conclusion, the ongoing global interest in the role of women in peace and security, and the improvement we are witnessing in their participation in policy efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts will have real and positive impacts on peace and security and will shape the typical disastrous outcomes in various conflict regions throughout the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mrs. Adhikari (Nepal): My delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate. My delegation expresses its profound gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar for their remarks.

Sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict not only affects the dignity and honour of the victims, but also leaves negative impacts on families, communities and societies. The report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/2013/149) depicts the pervasiveness of sexual violence and its interconnection with the maintenance of international peace and security.

After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006, the Government of Nepal has traversed a long path towards empowering women. The interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 has ensured the maximum participation of women in decision-making positions in all walks of national life, from grassroots to national levels. Peace committees at the district level play a very important role in managing post-conflict issues, including one-third representation by women. Nepal is committed to increasing the number of women in the Nepal army and police and United Nations peacekeeping operations in order to make them more inclusive.

Protecting and promoting the rights of the people and ensuring inclusive development is at the core of our efforts to build a peaceful and prosperous Nepal. We are fully committed to preventing all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence. Nepal is a State party to seven core international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The independent judicial system and the National Human Rights Commission — a constitutional human rights watchdog body — are playing a prominent role in safeguarding the rights of the people.

Nepal strongly believes that there can be no peace and security if violence against women and girls persists. The Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2009; the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007; the Gender-Based Violence Act, 2010; the National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Women and Children, 2012; the National Commission on Women Act, 2006; and other national laws provide the measures necessary to address violence against women and girls. Moreover, there is a sustained effort to review laws that discriminate against women.

Nepal is the first South Asian country to develop a national plan of action on resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). Increasing the participation of women in decision-making, protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and ending impunity are the topmost priorities set forth in our plan. We have a zero-tolerance policy against gender-based violence.

The Government of Nepal has never reneged on its commitment to prosecute cases involving grave violations of human rights and to end impunity through the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms. We are fully conscious of fulfilling our international obligations and national commitments, and we are enacting laws to establish transitional justice mechanisms. Our 2013 ordinance on the investigation of disappeared persons and on the truth and reconciliation commission is currently being examined by the Supreme Court, and is therefore sub judice.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that the international community has to play an important role in ending all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Nepal stands firmly committed to ensuring the full protection of women's rights and preventing sexual violence and all other forms of violations of human rights. We look forward to working more closely with the international community in the days ahead.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): We congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June, as well as for convening this thematic debate. We also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and the other speakers for their briefings this morning.

We begin by reaffirming the importance that Botswana attaches to the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children, as well as our commitment to address all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence.

Sexual violence in armed conflict represents one of the most heinous violations or abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is therefore a matter both of upholding universal human rights and of maintaining international security, in keeping with relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, Botswana welcomes the continued focus by the Council on this thematic debate and wishes to reiterate the importance of increased and more systemic attention to the women and peace and security agenda in the Council's own work.

We remain deeply concerned that, despite repeated condemnations by the international community of sexual violence in conflict situations, such acts continue to occur, and in some situations have even become systematic and widespread, with women and children constituting the majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict. We call on all perpetrators of such heinous acts to find it in their hearts to stop such crimes. Sexual violence in the name of armed conflict contravenes human rights. It goes against human nature and against humankind.

In that regard, I wish to state categorically that impunity for sexual violence, including by armed groups, is unacceptable and can never be tolerated. To that end, my delegation wishes to underscore the importance of ending impunity for such acts as part of a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, justice and security. Regrettably, a lack of accountability tends to reinforce the social normalization of, and tolerance for, sexual violence. We therefore recognize the need for enhanced political will and commitment to prevent these crimes by promoting and protecting the rights of women and children.

While we remain convinced that more needs be done to address such ongoing atrocities, my delegation also wishes to emphasise the responsibility of States to comply with their relevant obligations to end impunity, and to effectively use all available means to enforce accountability by prosecuting all perpetrators of such crimes. Botswana recognises the important role of the United Nations system in addressing violence against women and children at the global, regional and national levels, and in assisting States in their efforts to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and children.

To that end, I wish to express the support of my delegation for the work of UN-Women, as well as the mandates of the Secretary-General's Special Representatives on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Children and Armed Conflict. While also recognizing the existing normative framework established under various Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1261 (1999), 1325 (2000) and other subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security and on children and armed conflict, Botswana shares the belief that efforts to address sexual violence in conflict should be consistent with, and complementary to, wider United Nations efforts. In that regard, we also wish to underline that greater coordination and collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders is essential to strengthening global efforts to address sexual violence.

Botswana believes that efforts to end sexual violence must also promote women's active and equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, transitional justice and security sector reform processes. In that regard, we strongly support the involvement of women in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

With regard to women's access to justice, we call on States to take practical steps to address obstacles in women's access to justice, including by creating an enabling environment where women can easily report incidents of violence without fear or intimidation. Furthermore, we urge all States to strengthen the capacity of national criminal justice systems to serve victims with dignity.

With regard to the engagement of all segments of society to combat sexual violence, our belief is that men and boys must be socialized and engaged as partners to create a culture of peace, tolerance and respect for women. That includes ending the stigmatization of victims and instilling a change of attitude and behaviour in men and boys.

Botswana therefore pledges to work with the international community as it seeks to find ways to stop violence against women and children in the context of conflict. We welcome the Council's unanimous adoption this morning of a new resolution on women and peace and security (resolution 2106 (2013)). We remain optimistic that, given our collective will, especially in the Security Council, we will end such shameful crimes against humanity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Nduhuura (Uganda): I thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate on women and peace and security with a focus on sexual violence in conflict. I would like to convey our appreciation to United Kingdom Foreign Secretary William Hague, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar of Uganda, who spoke on behalf of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, for their insightful statements.

We welcome the continuous efforts by the international community to highlight the urgent need for effective measures and action to prevent, combat and eradicate the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. While significant progress has been made through concerted efforts at all levels, including by the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence and by UN-Women, there is no doubt that a lot more remains to be done, especially in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict. My delegation therefore calls for an intensification of efforts to ensure compliance with the obligations to prosecute perpetrators, end impunity and provide equal protection and access to justice for all victims of sexual violence, particularly women and girls.

The Government of Uganda has taken a comprehensive approach aimed at enhancing women's empowerment, enhancing their participation and involvement in the promotion of peace and security, in conflict-prevention and resolution, in eradicating sexual violence and in ending impunity. We are committed to the implementation of the relevant instruments.

In 2008, Uganda developed a national action plan based on resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) and the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region (2008), which complements other national, regional and international policy and legal frameworks to which Uganda is a party. The national action plan gave renewed impetus and resolve in Uganda's efforts toward's the recognition and advancement of women's rights and the campaign to eradicate sexual violence. The plan was revised in 2011 to take into account the lessons learned during its implementation, including the need to make indicators more streamlined and succinct for better monitoring and reporting. The revised plan will serve as a guide to all implementing actors until 2015, although it will be reviewed periodically to set new priorities based on experiences on the ground during implementation.

We would like to stress the need for all parties to armed conflict to enforce the prohibition against sexual violence through their chains of command and to ensure that alleged abuses are investigated promptly and that perpetrators held accountable.

Uganda strongly supports more active participation and involvement by women in addressing the concerns raised by sexual violence in conflict, post-conflict situations and peacebuilding, in particular in processes such as security sector and justice sector reform. We are convinced that sexual violence can be more effectively combated through the strengthening of national judicial systems, including by revising discriminatory laws, simplifying procedures for lodging complaints and providing free legal services to victims. We also recognize the importance of providing timely assistance, including health services, and supporting the livelihoods of victims and survivors of sexual violence.

United Nations peacekeepers and those of regional organizations authorized by the United Nations have a key role to play in preventing sexual violence in conflict situations by practicing zero tolerance within their ranks and protecting vulnerable populations. There is no doubt that increasing the number of women recruited and deployed in peacekeeping operations would make a significant contribution to addressing the problem of sexual violence in conflict.

In conclusion, we must redouble our efforts and sustain the momentum in the fight against sexual violence at the national, regional and international levels, using a multi-pronged approach and utilizing all of the tools at our disposal. We therefore welcome the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) by the Security Council today as one of the ways of advancing further action towards eradicating sexual violence in conflict situations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): We welcome your initiative, Mr. President, in convening this debate on an issue that has gained strong public and political acknowledgement. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab

Bangura, as well as the Special Envoy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the representative of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice.

We continue to witness a disturbing increase in the trend to use sexual violence as a political and military tool, the effects of which are grave and long-lasting, often alienating entire groups, communities and peoples. It is unfortunate that, despite the existence of international legal instruments and normative mechanisms, there is an alarming escalation in the levels of sexual violence during and after armed conflicts, which has devastating consequences on women and girls. Their protection deserves our utmost attention as a primary responsibility of all of us, because it is a serious humanitarian concern and significant security issue. It also requires a multidimensional approach.

Over the past decade, particular attention has been paid to addressing some of the specific crimes experienced by women and girls during armed conflict, namely, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution and enslavement. Today it is critical to ensure accountability for past and present crimes and not to grant immunity to perpetrators or amnesty for future crimes.

It is commendable that the Council continues to focus on how best to achieve effective justice for crimes of sexual violence in conflict in order to end impunity, formally investigate and prosecute persons responsible for such crimes and grave violations, prevent their recurrence and seek justice and peace.

In that context, Armenia also attaches the utmost importance to the promotion of justice and the rule of law, as those values are indispensable for the maintenance of international and regional security and the protection of human rights. A consensus has emerged that the rule of law should be promoted at both the national and the international levels and should be based on the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of international law and the principle of good governance. We therefore share the views expressed by Council members and other speakers calling for more systematic attention to impunity and justice. We also agree that increased efforts to fight impunity at the national and international levels are essential.

I would also like to emphasize that special attention must be paid to children who are victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, especially girls, who usually make up the largest group of victims in armed conflict. In addition to the physical damage it causes, sexual violence often leaves other forms of lasting harm and stigma.

However, we cannot address sexual violence simply by naming and punishing offenders. More fundamental changes are needed at the institutional and societal levels. In that context, sexual violence against women will never be adequately addressed without focusing on the empowerment of women and their participation in the political, social and economic spheres.

Armenia takes note of some positive trends in that field. Over the past decade, the Security Council has put in place a normative framework for women's participation in peace processes, the protection and promotion of women's human rights and the mainstreaming of gender equality and perspectives in the contexts of armed conflict, peacebuilding and reconstruction.

Peacebuilding needs the involvement of women. The role played by women in peacebuilding in many countries over the past decade has highlighted the importance of their full participation. Women need to be present at the table to discuss issues such as genocide, impunity and security, if a just and enduring peace is to be built.

However, despite the progress made, a great deal remains to be addressed and accomplished, as female voices are not always heard. Women remain largely excluded, especially from efforts to find workable solutions to conflicts. We should further promote their participation.

It will come as news to no one that the costs of conflict are borne disproportionately by women and girls. And since women pay the highest price when peace is absent, they are important stakeholders in peacebuilding. The inclusion of women in all stages of peace processes would help guarantee more lasting and representative settlements.

Armenia recognizes the key role and critical efforts of the Security Council in preventing sexual violence and combating impunity in conflict and post-conflict situations. We have encouraged continued action by the Council, including the development of effective measures to put an end to sexual violence in conflict. We welcome the adoption of today's resolution by the Council (resolution 2106 (2013)), which will serve as a practical tool in the consideration of policies, programmes and actions that can successfully further the implementation of commitments in combating sexual violence.

Armenia expresses its readiness to work closely with the Council, other United Nations bodies, interested institutions and concerned non-governmental organizations to expand and implement the women and peace and security agenda and better the situation of women around the world, including those affected by armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mrs. Carrion (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to join the many previous speakers who have thanked you, Sir, for having convened this debate. I also express our gratitude to all those, especially the women, who work every day to promote peace and security.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda has made clear progress, expanding in both breadth and depth to occupy the important place it does today, supported by the legal instruments, political initiatives and practical activities of the Organization.

Despite that progress, however, we regret to note that reports from a number of conflict and post-conflict situations continue to point to increasing physical and emotional violence against women and girls, who are the primary victims of sexual violence and its negative consequences for their quality of life and future development. In that regard, we would stress the need to defend the human rights of the victims of serious violations. In our view, the United Nations system should continue to fight against impunity, bring to justice those guilty for such violations and strengthen national capacities, using regional capacities to promote international justice in the defence of women's rights.

Uruguay considers the issue of women and peace and security to be an essential part of a larger agenda that includes the situation of children in armed conflict as well as the protection of civilians in armed conflict; they are integral parts of the whole. It is therefore essential to make coordinated progress and to use all the instruments available to the Organization, particularly its capacities in the field.

One instrument in such efforts is peacekeeping operations, which in recent years have included mandates for the protection of civilians that pay particular attention to women and children. There has been significant progress. However, the periodic attacks against civilian populations, including in areas where the missions are deployed, shows the limitations that still exist against dealing with the perpetrators of these attacks — limitations for the local population as well as for the international community. Through resolution 1325 (2000), the Council has stressed the important role that women play in the prevention of conflicts and in peacebuilding.

Uruguay has been in the vanguard of incorporating women into the armed forces, and that can be seen in the number of women who are deployed in the armed forces as well as in the Uruguayan police and in the formed police units of peacekeeping operations. Those women volunteers have always played a key role, and they are also interested in returning to jobs in the field, which shows, I think, the commitment that they have to the goals of the missions. That is why I think it is important to reiterate the need to continue to promote the greatest possible participation of women in peacekeeping processes, because they provide undeniable qualitative advantages.

With regard to the implementation of the agenda of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, we would like particular stress to be given to women and children through the work that we do at Headquarters as well as through the work that is done by Blue Helmets on the ground. We would also like to stress the importance of having the broadest possible support for this agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Elbahi (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to all the parties involved in holding these open debates on women and peace and security, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000), for the second time this year.

My delegation would like to state that the situation of women in areas of conflict in the Sudan has witnessed considerable progress compared to previous periods, thanks to the efforts of my Government, embodied in the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement with some armed rebel movements, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). It should be recalled that there are a number of rebel movements still outside the peace process. They still violate human rights in areas of conflict, including acts of violence and sexual violence against women and girls. The Council should therefore send a strong signal to those movements to compel them to sit at the negotiation table and to desist from perpetrating grave violations of human rights, particularly against women and children.

In the implementation of the work plan contained in resolution 1325 (2000), our Government established a number of specialized centres at the central and national levels to coordinate the efforts of women in the fields of peace and development and to provide them with consultative guidelines with regard to strengthening the principles of equality and a gender perspective.

National programmes on rehabilitation, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration have devoted special priority to the situation of women, in close cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, including UN-Women. My country has had a national strategy on combating gender-based violence since 2005, and has established a unit under the Ministry of Justice to combat violence against women and children. In order to safeguard our borders, prevent the smuggling of weapons and stem the subversive activities undertaken by rebel movements, which violate human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls, we will continue to enforce the border agreement with Chad, as well as the tripartite agreement with Chad and the Central African Republic, in addition to extending the security cooperation protocol with Libya. At the justice level, the Office of the Prosecutor General in Darfur continues to look into reports submitted by victims.

In addition to the efforts deployed by the advisory council for human rights in Darfur, social services and security units as well as the unit against violence against women, the Government this month launched the 10-year national action plan on human rights as a clear-cut national strategy to enhance the situation of human rights in the Sudan. The plan was welcomed by the United Nations independent expert on human rights during his latest visit to the Sudan earlier this month. The Government of the Sudan emphasizes its interest in enhancing the rights of women and in protecting them, and reiterates its wish to continue cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as with the relevant institutions. We will also continue our cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies with regard to capacity-building.

In conclusion, my delegation wish to underscore that the Secretary-General's reports must contain verifiable and correct information. Government bodies must be informed of the contents of those reports long enough before they are published, so that Governments can comment and take the necessary steps on them in the event that they prove true. We also call upon the Council to deploy efforts to address such root causes of conflict as poverty, a lack of development and climate change.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Mr. António: Let me begin by joining preceding speakers in congratulating the presidency for the United Kingdom's accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to express the African Union's (AU) deep appreciation for the holding of this open debate on a topic of great importance, as illustrated by the overwhelming number of participants.

This debate bears eloquent testimony to the United Kingdom's commitment and efforts towards the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions at the highest political level. The adoption, under the United Kingdom's leadership of the Group of Eight Summit, held in London on 11 April, of the declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict further reflects that commitment.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his personal commitment and engagement in giving this issue the attention it deserves. I would also like to thank Ms. Bangura for her leadership in representing the African continent. We want her to know how proud we are of the work she is doing on this important issue.

The issue of sexual violence in conflict implies a collective moral obligation and provokes a sense of urgency, given the ongoing escalation of this crime and its devastating effects on its innocent victims — women and girls, men and boys. The African Union's efforts have focused on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in conjunction with the gender policy adopted by the African Union in 2009. Furthermore, the AU's road map for the African Peace and Security Architecture for the period 2011-2013 devotes an entire section to the topic of women and peace and security. The AU Peace and Security Department has taken concrete steps to mainstream gender into its work at the institutional, operational and programmatic levels. The inclusion of gender experts as part of post-conflict needs-assessment missions undertaken by the Peace and

Security Reconstruction Department is a step forward in formulating efficient post-conflict reconstruction programmes.

Similarly, efforts have also been made within AU peace support operations to address the different needs of men and women as peacekeepers, while recognizing that much more must be done at the cultural and policy levels to address gender differences in such operations. In 2011, as part of its efforts to raise awareness in the Peace and Security Council on the situation of women and children in Africa, the AU Panel of the Wise commissioned a report on mitigating the vulnerabilities of women and children in armed conflicts in 2011. The report highlights how rape and sexual and gender-based violence have reached pandemic proportions during conflicts. Within its mandate, the Peace and Security Department has a central role to play in developing and implementing strategies on preventing and responding to sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

It was in that context that the African Union Peace and Security Council held a meeting on 28 March 2011 on the theme of women and children and other vulnerable groups in armed conflict, with the participation, among others, of the then United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Building on that meeting, given the priority accorded this issue by the leadership of the African Union Commission, efforts are under way to appoint an AU special representative on sexual violence in conflict.

The African Union Commission has been encouraged by its continued strong collaboration with the United Nations through the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, with a view to signing a cooperation framework in the near future. We are convinced that the envisaged cooperation framework will go a long way to enhancing cooperation and coordination between the African Union Commission and the United Nations as they address conflict-related sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ibrahim (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, Ms. Zainab Bangura, Ms. Angelina Jolie and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this open debate on sexual violence against women, an issue of great interest to Member States in general, and one that has recently acquired a special dimension in view of the levels of violence being perpetrated against women in my country, particularly since the documented number of cases of rape committed by armed terrorist groups is about 37,000 in Damascus and its environs alone, according to the estimates of Syria's national reconciliation committee, and the number of women who have been kidnapped has reached about 1,000 to date.

My country has sent several official letters to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura detailing documented information on the responsibility of armed terrorist groups for acts of rape, sexual violence and murder against women in Syria. Armed groups continue to kidnap women and girls and use them as spoils of war and sex slaves for the pleasure of terrorists, while the sponsors of such groups, thugs of war and sexual perverts, some of whom reside in Gulf sheikhdoms, continue to issue edicts blessing such crimes under the so-called sexual or fornication jihad. All this deviant moral and social behaviour has been met with an unjustified and objectionable silence on the part of many of the specialized United Nations agencies. That continued suspicious silence is no longer acceptable.

I would also like to address some of the statements that have been made in this meeting, particularly the total and deliberate omission of any mention of the crimes committed by those terrorist groups — some of which are affiliated with Al-Qaida — to the extent that some Member States look as if they are supporting and protecting [illegible] kind of terrorism and justifying the acts committed by the terrorists, such as cannibalism in the wake of their slaughter of their victims. In a meeting such as this, we believe that it would be proper to say that such an attitude cannot put an end to such horrible practices and appalling forms of violence against women.

It is truly shameful for the apartheid Israeli regime to speak of women's rights and combating violence against women while its soldiers and settlers continue their daily aggression against Palestinian women, men and children, in addition to the violence practiced in its detention centres and prisons, tantamount to the worst forms of human rights violations. Before 1948, Israeli gangs were guilty of several massacres; they later formed the so-called Israeli Defense Forces, which has perpetuated the approach of those terrorist gangs, committing murder, destruction, rape, displacement and other crimes that are an affront to humankind. None of those crimes have been curbed; they continue to this day.

Palmach, Haganah, Irgun — these were all Jewish terrorist organizations active before 1948, and they formed the nucleus for the so-called Israeli Defense Forces. Those were terrorist gangs that committed collective massacres, displaced Arabs — Muslims and Christians alike — desecrated Muslim and Christian holy places and committed hundreds of massacres, such as in Deir Yassin, Balad Al-Shaykh, Al-Dawayima, Al-Tantura, Sa'Sa', Arab Al-Mawasi, Saf Saf, Haifa, Jaffa, Al-Husayniyya and scores more. All those violations continue to this day at the hands of the Israeli army and its settlers.

As for the statement made by the representative of Turkey, I would say that before he calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to grant access to the United Nations — whose agencies are active in Syria to this day — his regime should allow the United Nations and other international organizations to enter and visit the many training camps on Turkish territory where hundreds of terrorists reside and train in order to eventually go to Syria and commit their murderous crimes.

I would also like to address the crimes that have been perpetrated against Syrian women and girls displaced to neighbouring countries. Their rights have been violated, and those who support terrorist groups like Al-Nusra — a group affiliated with Al-Qaida that commits the most heinous crimes against civilians, including women — answer to the Qatari regime, which continues to arm and finance terrorists and provide them with a propaganda smokescreen to cover up their crimes against women and girls. They appear daily on satellite television channels, issuing fundamentalist and destructive fatwas blessing the commission of horrible crimes that violate human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Syrian Arab Republic continues to believe in the peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of a comprehensive national dialogue, an end to the terrorist campaign against Syria and the restoration of peace and security in my country, which is a land of tolerance and brotherly love.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

Before I draw the meeting to a close, I note that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura has been with us throughout almost the entire debate and is here with us at the end. I thank her again for her briefing and all her work in this crucual area.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of the consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.6985

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6985th meeting

Tuesday, 25 June 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Sir Mark Lyall Grant	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	Togo	Mr. Kadangha-Bariki
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2013/338)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2013/338)

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the presence at the Council table of His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Albert Koenders, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and Ms. Amira Haq, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Koenders, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/338, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Koenders.

Mr. Koenders (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address the Security Council from Bamako in my new capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary General for Mali. The report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, which is before the Council in document S/2013/338, follows up on resolution 2100 (2013) of 25 April, establishing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

I wish to offer an overview of the situation on the ground in my briefing, focusing on four main themes: the security situation; the mediation process and national reconciliation, including the recently concluded preliminary agreement; preparations for the elections; and the humanitarian and human rights situations. Mr. Ladsous will focus more specifically on strategic and operational issues related to the transition, and Ms. Haq on the complex issue of support to the Mission.

The security situation has gradually improved as a result of the military operations launched in January by the Malian army and France against extremist groups in northern Mali. Most large cities in the north have been taken. Since these large-scale operations, the forces of Operation Serval and the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) have undertaken tactical operations. There have been no major clashes. Since these operations, some extremist elements have joined the population and others have left the country. The major fighting has stopped and the security situation in Timbuktu and Gao is gradually returning to normal, thanks to the presence of AFISMA and Operation Serval alongside the Malian forces. The incidents recorded in these areas recently should be seen as isolated acts of banditry. Furthermore, the extremist groups seem to be avoiding direct confrontation with the Malian army and its allies. However, scattered operations continue, leading to the discovery of several weapons caches.

Despite this improvement in the security situation, the situation remains complex and fragile. We have reported clashes between the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) and various armed groups in the north — essentially the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest and other armed Tuareg and Arab elements. Several reasons have been behind the clashes, including fighting for control of some routes used for drug trafficking and other goods, as well as acts of revenge for the atrocities committed against civilians during the occupation. In addition, another armed Tuareg movement — the Haut Conseil de l'Azawad — has been established as a coalition of the Mouvement islamique de l'Azawad and elements of the MNLA.

As for the region of Kidal, the MNLA has maintained control of the city of Kidal and its surroundings and strengthened its presence in some localities. Meanwhile, the Malian army has reinforced its presence in Gao. On 4 June, the Malian army launched an attack on the MNLA, taking the town of Anefis, which it holds to this day.

As the threat of asymmetric actions and violent clashes remains signficant, the protection of civilians and the security of United Nations personnel are among my main concerns as we lay the groundwork for MINUSMA in Bamako and the regions of the north. In this fragile security situation, regional and international partners, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the United Nations have stepped up their efforts to convince the Government of Mali and the MNLA to resume dialogue under the auspices of the ECOWAS mediator and his team in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

(*spoke in English*)

In that context, I am happy to report that on 18 June the transitional Government of Mali and armed groups in the northern regions, particularly the MNLA and the Haut Conseil de l'Azawad signed a preliminary agreement on the presidential elections and inclusive negotiations. The Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad and the popular front officially adhered to the preliminary agreement on the same day. I signed as a witness on behalf of the United Nations.

The preliminary agreement is, in my view, an important first step towards the full restoration of constitutional order and territorial integrity. It paves the way for the holding of elections nationwide, including in Kidal, and subsequent dialogue with elected officials on governance, justice, security sector reform and reconciliation issues. From 1 July onwards, if the Council so agrees, the MINUSMA Force Commander will chair the established Joint Technical Security Commission, which has started overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire in Kidal. This includes the process of cantonment as a first step in the process of disarmament and demobilization, the return to Kidal of the Malian armed forces with Serval and AFISMA, and the return of the administration.

For my part, I will chair on behalf of the United Nations the international commission that will monitor and oversee the implementation of the agreement. An international commission of inquiry will also have to be established to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of genocide, crimes of sexual violence, drug trafficking and other serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law throughout the territory of Mali.

Although a first and preliminary step, the agreement is critical, not only because of the forthcoming elections, but also because it commits the parties to a post-electoral dialogue. If it is to be successful, the dialogue will need to be comprehensive and inclusive, and tackle the root causes of the recurrent crises in Mali.

Some limited progress was also registered on the broader political front. The long-awaited National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation was established on 25 April and its 33 members, including its President and two Vice -Presidents, were appointed. The Commission came under some criticism for the perceived lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the selection of its members. Its mandate and scope were also deemed by many as too broad. However, people generally welcomed its establishment and look forward to the start of its activities if it addresses long-standing issues of truth and impunity. The Commission nonetheless faces technical and logistical challenges. The international community on the ground is determined to provide the necessary support and resources, and has established for this purpose a coordination mechanism at the request of the Commission and led by MINUSMA.

Meanwhile, importantly for the Council, preparations are under way for the elections, starting with the presidential polls on 28 July. At the request of the Government, MINUSMA is supporting the deployment of sensitive and non-sensitive electoral materials to the northern regions as we speak. These include the national identification card — known as NINA cards — which will be the sole cards allowing individuals to vote. Meanwhile, coordination mechanisms have been established to enhance joint United Nations support to the elections as the Mission continues to deploy.

Major challenges remain, including the need to maintain the broad political consensus on technical aspects of the elections, the timely delivery of electoral materials, and issues of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. One of the challenges is to ensure that IDPs can retrieve their NINA cards so they can vote in their current places of residence. Concerning the participation of refugees, on 14 June a Government delegation visited Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger to conduct a census of refugees with a view to identifying potential voters and discuss modalities for setting up polling stations in the respective countries. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration are working closely with the Government in this regard. Concerning the provision of security throughout the electoral period, the Government has requested the support of MINUSMA, particularly for the northern regions. We are currently assessing the needs in the context of our capabilities.

Humanitarian needs in Mali remain of concern to me. About 3.5 million people are considered food insecure, with 1.4 million of them in need of immediate food assistance and at least one in five households in the three northern regions facing a severe food shortage. Some 660,000 children under the age of five remain at risk of acute malnutrition. Mali, north and south combined, has the third highest child mortality rate worldwide, with 176 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Humanitarian activities in the northern regions are being carried out where possible in spite of the security challenges and the coming rainy season, which will to a certain extent limit the delivery of assistance. Although most of the administration has returned to the Gao and Timbuktu regions, the delivery of services remains a very serious challenge. Some schools have reopened in those regions, but in Kidal the administration has yet to deploy and no schools are functioning. It is estimated that more than 100,000 children still have no access to education in the north. Access to health care also remains limited. As of 18 June, the consolidated appeal process for Mali for 2013 was 32-per cent funded, having raised $133 million. In my view, additional resources are urgently needed to address the basic needs of millions of Malians and pave the way for early recovery, which will be critical to gaining and retaining the trust and support of the people.

The human rights situation remains precarious. I have sent human rights teams to Gao, Gossi, Timbuktu and Kidal. They have registered violations committed by all parties. These include disappearances, extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment, looting of private property, illegal arrests and arbitrary detention, as well as impunity, which is exacerbated by ethnic tensions between different communities. In addition, there is a severe shortage in the delivery of basic services such as clean water, health care and education, which are our top priorities. Following the organization of the national colloquium on transitional justice, discussions are taking place as we speak in Bamako on transitional justice processes, entailing truth-seeking, investigations, the prosecution of perpetrators and reparations, with the support of UNDP and MINUSMA.

Meanwhile, the Mission continues to mainstream gender issues throughout its activities. In cooperation with UN-Women and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, it is supporting the national strategy for women's participation in the elections, as well as advocacy towards the allocation of a women's quota in the electoral process. Also, the Mission is setting up mechanisms to address and prevent conflict-related sexual violence. In turn, these mechanisms will pave the way to support for the Government in the establishment of institutional structures to address sexual and gender-based violence in the framework of security sector reform.

With regard to support for cultural preservation, UNESCO and the Government of Mali have recently jointly assessed the damage to Timbuktu's cultural heritage, including the situation of ancient manuscripts. A total of 14 of Timbuktu's mausoleums, including those that are part of the UNESCO World Heritage sites, have been totally destroyed, along with two others at the Djingareyber Mosque. The emblematic El Farouk monument at the entrance to the city was also razed. An estimated 4,203 manuscripts from the Ahmed Baba research centre were lost, while another 300,000 that had been pre-emptively removed — mainly to Bamako — and are in urgent need of conservation. On the basis of this early assessment, MINUSMA and UNESCO will join hands, as requested by the Security Council, in efforts to support the safeguarding of Malian cultural and historical heritage, which has been seriously affected by the armed conflict in northern Mali.

The situation in Mali has, as Council members know, broad regional and international repercussions. The recent attacks in Niger are a stark reminder of the magnitude of the problems facing the Sahel region. As international attention is focused on Mali, terrorist and other criminal groups will continue to shift their operations to neighbouring countries as a result of the porous and extremely weak border management control systems in place. Effectively addressing the challenges facing the Sahel region will require time and very concerted efforts. The upcoming meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on Mali on 1 July in Bamako and the presentation of the United Nations integrated strategy to the Council tomorrow will provide good opportunities to further highlight the transnational nature of threats and the need for a coherent and coordinated approach in tackling them.

As we focus on the wider region, we also need to acknowledge that long-term support will be required. In Mali, the root causes of the crises will need to be addressed, as noted above, including bad governance, corruption, cleavages within and between regions and groups, a sense of political exclusion on the part of a new generation, poverty and the lack of security sector reform. Any solution can only be Malian in nature, and accompanied by the international community. For that to happen, broad based dialogue is needed, thoroughly analysing the complex causes of the crisis that has shocked so many Malians, in order to prevent it from happening again.

The international community is showing great solidarity, and I urge all Malians to seize this opportunity to steer their country in the right direction. In this regard, I welcome the preliminary agreement and call on the parties to support its full implementation in the spirit of national cohesion and long-lasting peace. Further, I invite the political class to reach a firm consensus on the electoral process, in spite of anticipated risks, and encourage all Malians to ensure an inclusive non-violent electoral and post-electoral period. Supporting the transitional authorities in providing an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful and transparent elections and the implementation of the preliminary agreement will be a key focus of my efforts in the weeks to come.

The robust mandate the Council has given us includes the stabilization of key population centres and the protection of civilians. It underlines the need to emphasize a political solution to the fundamental problems of the country, including human rights, the restoration of State authority and the rule of law sectors. It underlines, if agreed, the need to deploy a peacekeeping operation in a context of asymmetric threats that will be taken very seriously.

At present, naturally, our resources are still limited. We are immediately called to assist in two key areas — the implementation of the preliminary accord and the upcoming elections — that constitute preliminary steps towards the next important phase. The success of these activities will depend on key confidence-building and assistance to put Mali on the path of stability. I take this opportunity to call on Member States to fully support us and contribute critical and immediate resources, military and police personnel, and key enablers.

In closing, allow me to thank the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other international partners for their commitment to addressing the Malian crisis. I particularly would like to extend my gratitude to the African Union Special Representative for Mali and Head of AFISMA, former President Pierre Buyoya, for his personal role and involvement in ongoing stabilization efforts. Also, I would like to commend AFISMA troops for their courage and dedication to the cause of peace and stability in Mali and reiterate my condolences to the bereaved families of their fallen brothers in arms.

The President: I thank Mr. Koenders for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hervé Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council at this undoubtedly decisive juncture in our collective involvement in Mali. Indeed, if the Council decides today that the security situation prevailing in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) areas of responsibility allow for a transfer of authority from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to MINUSMA on 1 July, MINUSMA will eventually become the third largest United Nations peacekeeping operation. MINUSMA will operate under robust rules of engagement. Its military and police forces will absorb the majority of the AFISMA forces. There will be a grace period of four months to allow military and police units to strengthen their contributions and incorporate the capabilities requested by the United Nations in terms of staffing, training and equipment. The support of international partners will be very important in that regard. I would note that the United Nations continues to receive additional commitments from potential contributors, enabling us to reach the maximal authorized personnel levels and thus respond to the Mission's needs. But we still face critical gaps, especially with regard to enablers and force multipliers.

MINUSMA will therefore play a key role in the stabilization of Mali and the protection of its citizens threatened by insecurity in the north of the country. Political engagement with Malian actors in order to promote dialogue and reconciliation between and among communities remains the cornerstone of our involvement, as was the case last week during the recent negotiations in Ouagadougou. MINUSMA will also be very active in promoting human rights and support for the restoration of the authority of the State, including in the areas of justice and strengthening the rule of law. MINUSMA troops and police officers will help create a safe environment that is conducive to stabilization by deploying from major cities in northern Mali. They will conduct patrols, both alone and together with the Malian defence and security forces. MINUSMA troops will be mobile and will conduct operations across a wide area on the basis of integrated analysis and information-sharing with partners. A limited presence will be maintained in Bamako, and all MINUSMA operations will take into account the need to minimize the risk to civilians.

In preparation for the transition, AFISMA has continued to gradually assume operational responsibility for several areas in northern Mali, as Operation Serval has begun to draw down. As of today, 25 June, the strength of AFISMA stands at 6,148 troops, with personnel deployed in the towns and regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Ménaka, Tessalit, Aguelhok, Douentza, Diabaly and now Kidal.

Since its establishment on 25 April, MINUSMA has begun to implement its mandate in terms of political good offices, electoral support, human rights and, in close cooperation with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, support for the restoration of State authority. The MINUSMA military component will be built up in the coming months. On 1 July, MINUSMA will have an initial operational capability, including in the force headquarters. The Force Commander arrived in Mali today and the Deputy Force Commander deployed last week. The two sector headquarters in Gao and Timbuktu will also be operational soon, with staff for all headquarters to be further and quickly built up over the next two months. The two Sector Commanders have been recruited and will deploy shortly. By the end of July, we expect 100 staff officers to be on the ground and all headquarters to be fully staffed by the end of August. I can therefore state that we anticipate reaching full operational capability by 31 December.

I would note that some have raised concerns about the transition of the AFISMA Chadian troops as Blue Helmets, given Chad's listing by the Secretary-General among the countries that have allowed child recruitment in their armed forces. Clearly, the Government of Chad will need to comply with and implement the five short-term measures of its action plan to end the recruitment of child soldiers within the four-month grace period I just mentioned, as agreed with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Let me assure the Council that the United Nations is making every effort to screen the Chadian contingent that is to be re-hatted and ensure that no troops under 18 are among them, as well as enhance our efforts on training on child protection issues.

With respect to the police, we intend to re-hat the three formed police units currently deployed with AFISMA in Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu on 1 July, if the Council so decides. Assessments of those units are currently being conducted. Twenty additional individual police officers from AFISMA will also be re-hatted, while 10 new police officers are expected on the ground by 1 July. Two additional formed police units and 50 individual police officers are expected to be deployed in August.

Training will play a key role in managing the transition in Mali from AFISMA to MINUSMA. We are deploying a mobile team to Mali today to conduct initial training for AFISMA personnel to undergo the transition to MINUSMA. Its immediate focus will be on the officer ranks, so as to ensure that the most important messages regarding the mandate, as well as the posture, attitude and conduct of the United Nations force, reach the troops deployed throughout the country.

The majority of our civilian, police and military staff will be in the north. We are currently looking at establishing civilian field offices in Timbuktu and Gao and, very quickly, a small presence in Kidal to support the implementation of the preliminary agreement. We will also maintain a military presence in the key population centres, defined for the purposes of the mandate as Douentza and Diabaly; the key cities of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal; and the towns of Ménaka and Tessalit. Our emphasis will be on a mobile force able to project influence across the wide geographical areas in the north.

I would reiterate that we continue to seek pledges for important outstanding capabilities, including medium-utility helicopters, armed helicopters, intelligence, information operations and special forces. We are counting more than ever before on the continued support of both our traditional and our new troop-contributing countries to help us fill those critical shortfalls.

I think that the activities that we are conducting in Mali are an excellent example of the unique nature of United Nations peacekeeping as a political-military endeavour. Under the leadership of Special Representative Albert Koenders, whose role in the Mission I commend, the Mission has played a key role alongside the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union in the political negotiations leading to the preliminary agreement on Kidal. MINUSMA will now have critical and immediate responsibilities to support the implementation of the preliminary agreement — signed, as the Council is aware, on 18 June — particularly with regard to the ceasefire provisions.

As outlined by Mr. Koenders, those include chairing the commission that will monitor the ceasefire, accompanying the return of the Malian army and administration to Kidal, and overseeing the cantonment of armed groups. The posture and capacities of future MINUSMA forces will be critical to the success of that process. The rapid deployment of AFISMA troops to Kidal town will be also be key to ensuring that the process is off to a good start, and I am pleased to report that an AFISMA contingent was deployed to Kidal over the weekend for that purpose.

Just over four weeks remain until the first round of the presidential elections. As experience in other countries has taught us, a poorly managed electoral process could further aggravate instability. To that end, MINUSMA will continue to actively support all efforts to develop consensus among stakeholders on the rules of the game and a shared commitment to accepting the outcome of the elections.

Throughout the process, MINUSMA will provide security, technical and logistical support, to the extent possible, given the early stages of its deployment. We are closely looking at ways to strengthen the Mission's capabilities in those areas. To that end, for example, we are bringing additional resources from neighbouring countries under existing arrangements for inter-mission cooperation. My colleague Ms. Haq will elaborate further on the critical role of inter-mission cooperation in the success of our efforts in Mali. We will need agreement from contributing countries to realize the full potential of that important tool.

As we embark on this ambitious new chapter in the history of peacekeeping, it is worth taking a moment to contemplate the magnitude of the challenge before us. Past instances of failure, or partial failure, we know have had lasting implications for United Nations peacekeeping doctrine and practice and, most importantly, for civilians and peacekeepers on the ground. With that in mind, we must be aware that we are facing new and unique challenges.

First, the United Nations is deploying a peacekeeping operation in a geopolitical context characterized by asymmetrical threats not previously encountered in a United Nations peacekeeping environment. MINUSMA has a mandate to use all necessary means to ensure the implementation of many elements of its mandate, including taking active steps to deter and prevent the return of armed elements to key population centres. While that does not describe a peace-enforcement or counter-terrorism role, which will be undertaken by others who have capacities beyond the scope of and means of the United Nations mandate and capabilities, it will require the United Nations to be as robust as possible in implementing that mandate in an environment characterized by threats.

However, with respect to circumstances where the Mission might be under imminent and serious threat, we are finalizing a technical arrangement with France that will define the modalities to be used by the United Nations and by France for the provision of support by the latter to MINUSMA.

Secondly, in spite of the progress that I outlined earlier, three significant challenges remain for the transition, under the best conditions possible, from AFISMA to MINUSMA. Our central priority will be to maintain seamless continuity between the two operations so as to preserve the security gains made so far and avoid creating any security vacuums while supporting elections and the ceasefire agreement. An initial transition period of six months will see the buildup of all of our additional military capacities and the concomitant extension of the Mission's operations.

Thirdly, the realities on the ground, the harsh climate, the very limited infrastructure and the vast size of the geographic area of responsibility that we will have will create unique challenges for the sustainment and support of the Mission. The generation of logistical enablers will be an absolute initial priority to enable the establishment and sustainment of the Mission in northern Mali. My colleague Ms. Haq will elaborate on those efforts in greater detail.

However, we must be realistic and accept that not all of those capabilities and means will be immediately available. The deployment of mission components must also take account of such things as improved security conditions and the establishment of infrastructure. We will require patience, concerted support and significant investments to ensure that the gains made so far are protected, strengthen stability in Mali and make every effort to guard against the spread of insecurity to the surrounding region.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the members of the Council for their contributions and support as we prepare to launch the newest operation. Our ongoing joint efforts in Mali remind us that peacekeeping is truly a global partnership. We will build on the success of France's Operation Serval and, with the support of the Council and our partners in the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who have deployed their forces under AFISMA, we will continue to engage Malian actors on a political resolution to the conflict. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the African Union and ECOWAS for all of their efforts. I also thank the brave women and men of AFISMA for the exemplary work they have done to support the restoration of stability in Mali since the beginning of 2013. Moreover, our development partners, including the World Bank, bilateral donors and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, will also continue to have a critical role to play to make the new peace in Mali sustainable.

As the United Nations assumes command of operations in Mali, we now call on our other partners to join this campaign for peace, justice and reconciliation. As I said earlier, that will be a challenge that requires efforts by all stakeholders — first and foremost the Malians themselves, but also the international community, and especially the countries of the Sahel region. Lastly, it will be a challenge for the entire Organization. I am confident that we will meet it through our united efforts.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I recognize that we are discussing the launch of an important new mission, but maybe this is the time to remind Secretariat briefers that they should limit their remarks to 15 minutes. We have made some good progress in recent months in restricting the size of the written reports from the Secretary-General, but we seem to be going in the opposite direction in terms of the oral briefings from the Secretariat to the Council.

I now give the floor to Ms. Haq.

Ms. Haq: Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Council on mission-support efforts in Mali.

The immediate priority of the Department of Field Support is to establish the initial operational capability of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) as soon as possible. My colleague, Hervé Ladsous, has set the substantive compass according to which mission-support efforts in MINUSMA are guided. In my briefing to the Council today, I will explain how, despite formidable constraints, we are on track to meeting requirements and how we plan to satisfy the operational needs of MINUSMA as best we can from the transition on 1 July and onwards.

MINUSMA mission support is simultaneously engaged in two other complex endeavours, namely, preparations for the presidential elections, the first round of which will take place on 28 July, and follow-up to the interim agreement signed in Ouagadougou last week. That would be a formidable triple challenge in any context, but it is complicated by several features of the operating environment in Mali, and specifically in the northern part of the country.

Our efforts to set up the Mission currently focus on several priorities, including the provision of rations for troops, fuel for vehicles and premises for work and living. We are confident that our systems for the distribution of rations and water after 1 July will meet the needs of MINUSMA troops. We still face some critical information gaps with regard to fuel, but we anticipate that the MINUSMA fuel-distribution capacity will be operational by 1 July. With regard to the premises for the Mission, we are making arrangements to establish the various force and sector headquarters in Bamako and the north, starting with Gao and Timbuktu. A mission presence in Kidal will be established in due course.

In support of the elections, we have been involved in transporting election materials to Gao and Timbuktu. The agreement signed by the Government of Mali and representatives of the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad last week in Ouagadougou has significant implications for MINUSMA mission support. In particular, MINUSMA is expected to support and supervise the cantonment of combatants in one of the most challenging environments in the country, namely, Kidal.

MINUSMA is rightly considered to be one of the most logistically challenging missions the United Nations has ever launched. That is so for several reasons.

First, the climatic conditions in northern Mali, where most of our operations will be located, are harsh, to put it mildly. Sixty-five per cent of Mali's landmass, which is twice the size of France, is desert or semi-desert. The temperature in Timbuktu, which will be the sector-west headquarters for MINUSMA, regularly reaches 48°C, or 120°F. Last week, our team visited Kidal when the afternoon temperature there reached 52°C, or 125°F. There is no functioning power grid in Gao. Our energy needs there, as in Timbuktu and Kidal, will therefore be met through mobile power generators. At such temperatures, even high-capacity generators will be put to the test. Indeed, all information and communication technology, vehicles, refrigeration and tentage ultimately to be used in Mali will be exposed to climatic conditions that accelerate their decay. We already know that certain technological options are out of the question. For example, we are unable to deploy our mobile communication system to Kidal because its sensitive components will melt.

Under those extreme conditions, it comes as little surprise that water availability is limited, particularly in the arid north, where our operations will be concentrated. An initial engineering assessment by the Mission has already confirmed that in Kidal the Mission will jeopardize local water supply by tapping into local reservoirs. Therefore, conscious of the explicit request in resolution 2100 (2013) to manage the Mission's environmental impact carefully, we are looking into other technologies that would allow us to produce water from air humidity.

True operational capability means that MINUSMA must be able to provide a broad range of essential aviation services: ground services such as cargo handling, fire fighting and fuel delivery and storage; the ability to carry out search and rescue missions; and airfield and helicopter landing-site construction and renovation. Given the long distances that must be traversed in Mali, each and every one of those services must be in place, intact and functioning. Those are also highly technical and capital-intensive endeavours that take time to establish from scratch.

The airfields in northern Mali are unable to service large aircraft. The airstrips allow for only small to medium aircraft, which carry limited passengers and cargo. For the time being, therefore, we will need to rely on military helicopters for an unusually large share of air transport requirements. We are eagerly awaiting confirmation from various Member States as to the provision of helicopters for the Mission. The central importance of medical support to United Nations personnel is recognized by all. We all agree that we must ensure casualty evacuation and medical evacuation capability. In northern Mali that translates directly into more helicopters.

Of course, under those circumstances, road transport becomes all the more important, but there are challenges in that regard as well. Last week, when trying to determine the most feasible way to transport some computers, a satellite dish and some generators to the north, we discovered that there was no way for the equipment to arrive safely by road.

The problem is twofold. First, the road infrastructure in the north is spotty, often consisting of little more than sand over long stretches. Secondly, with respect to the security situation, even with the agreement with the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) in Kidal, there are still armed groups that have sworn to oppose and attack the United Nations at every opportunity. We need only recall the concerns raised by the suicide-bomb-making workshop discovered by French forces two weeks ago just a few miles outside of Gao, or the several thousand pounds of fertilizer, uniforms and uniform-making equipment that was seized.

We have deployed some of our most experienced mission-support colleagues to lead the effort in Bamako — our "A-team". These are colleagues with experience in starting up and sustaining some of the most challenging missions of the past 30 years. If anyone can get this done, they can, and I am confident that they will.

Others are chipping in. Because of the shortage of aircraft, the United Nations Mission in Liberia has lent its B200 aircraft to meet its short-term needs. Because of the time it would normally take to procure critical items, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti has made reserve equipment available for immediate delivery. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) has made available air assets, equipment and a range of back-office support functions, including human resources, finance and procurement staff. For its part, the Global Service Centre has drawn from the strategic deployment stocks in Brindisi to provide vehicles, communications equipment and security material for airlifting to Bamako.

The Global Field Support Strategy (GFSS) articulates a vision wherein the United Nations provides faster, higher-quality support for a win-win situation that benefits troops, civilian staff and the United Nations system as a whole. In sum, due to exigency as well as the upholding of GFSS principles, inter-mission cooperation, shared services and a smaller footprint with less risk to staff all are central features of the MINUSMA start-up and will remain central features throughout the life of the Mission.

Together with Hervé Ladsous and Jeff Feltman, we have instructed all peacekeeping and special political missions to expedite the release of staff who are needed in Mali.

The Department of Field Support and other departments have played an important part in staffing, financing and establishing the Mission during this critical start-up phase, with a strong emphasis on flexibility, pragmatism and timely action. The contract to rent several major facilities, including the building that will serve as force headquarters in Bamako, was prepared with staff from the Department of Field Support, the Department of Management, ONUCI and MINUSMA, and was concluded and signed by all parties concerned within one week of the initial interface with the landlord in Mali. For the United Nations, that is lightning speed. While United Nations rules and regulations are being closely adhered to, the emphasis on flexibility is leading to positive results indeed.

In Mali, neither the challenges nor the risks at hand should be underestimated. Much is beyond our control. But our efforts to date and the results achieved by MINUSMA thus far suggest that with commitment, vision and the continued support of Member States, we just may be able to beat the odds. When we reduce the Mission's environmental footprint by introducing solar power or technologies for local water production, we also reduce the costs, and security risks, of an exposed and vulnerable supply chain. When the Global Service Centre deploys engineering expertise, vehicles and information-technology equipment from its holdings, a mission becomes operational more quickly than it would have otherwise. This is a new way of doing business. This is a better way of doing peacekeeping.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Coulibaly (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Mali, to convey to you our warmest congratulations on the accession of your country, the United Kingdom, to the presidency of the Security Council in June. I wish also to welcome the convening of this meeting dealing with the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2013/338).

Exactly two months ago, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2100 (2013) establishing, under Chapter VII, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Since then, a number of new developments have occurred in the context of the implementation of the resolution.

Mali welcomes the report under consideration, which sets out the considerable progress that has been achieved in the security and political areas, particularly with regard to the effective implementation of the transition road map, the development of the dialogue and reconciliation process, the stepping up of preparations for the presidential and legislative elections, improvement in the human rights situation and the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and of the MINUSMA Force Commander.

In terms of security, the end of large-scale fighting around the main urban areas in the north, the routing of the armed groups and the drastic drop in their capacity to be spoilers thanks to the joint efforts of the Malian, African and French armed forces, all are favourable indicators with respect to the transfer of competence from AFISMA to MINUSMA within the time limit set by resolution 2100 (2013). That is why my delegation fully endorses the appeal made by the Secretary-General calling on Member States to support the deployment of MINUSMA.

Politically, I am pleased to recall the fact that on 18 June last, the Government of Mali, faithful to its commitments to the international community in the quest for a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in Mali, signed the preliminary agreement for the presidential elections and for inclusive peace talks in Mali, with the coordination of Malian armed movements.

Signed in Ouagadougou under the auspices of President Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso and mediator for the Mali crisis, the agreement represents a decisive step towards the re-establishment of the territorial integrity of Mali and creates conditions conducive to the holding of the presidential elections throughout the national territory.

In essence, the agreement provides for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the cantonment and disarmament of armed groups, and the deployment of administrative and basic services and the Malian defence and security forces in the Kidal region.

The Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance and the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad have expressed their support for the agreement.

Along those same lines, the President of the Republic, Mr. Dioncounda Traoré, held a number of meetings with political leaders with a view to the improved implementation of the agreement and the holding of transparent and peaceful elections.

I cannot end this chapter of my statement without reiterating the urgent appeal of the Government of Mali to the Council to ensure the transfer of competencies from the African-led international support mission for Mali to the new United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). That transfer must take place quickly so as to ensure that MINUSMA will be in Mali for as short a period as possible. The brevity of its mandate will serve as evidence of its success in Mali. For their leadership and invaluable contribution to resolving the crisis in Mali, we would like especially to thank His Excellency President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS Chairman-in-Office; His Excellency Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, mediator for the Mali crisis; and His Excellency President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Nigeria, the joint mediator. To the United Nations, the European Union, France, Chad and its army and to all our bilateral and multilateral partners, we express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude for the crucially essential role they continue to play for the definitive return of peace and stability in Mali.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.6986

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6986th meeting

Tuesday, 25 June 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Sir Mark Lyall Grant	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Ms. Jiang Hua
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Mr. Maes
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Munir
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	Togo	Mr. M'Beou
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

The President: As this is the last meeting of the Security Council that will be attended by our colleague Susan Rice, who has been the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for the past four and a half years, I would like to mark the occasion by saying, on behalf of all the members of the Council, that we have greatly appreciated the immense contribution that she has made to the Council's work over that time. On behalf of all of us, I wish her well in her new position as National Security Adviser. As she may be the first National Security Adviser to have been educated at Oxford University, she is certainly extremely well qualified for the job and we wish her well in it.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Fernandez-Taranco.

Mr. Fernandez-Taranco: As the human tragedy in Syria continues to unfold, the whole region is feeling the reverberations, with neighbours, such as Jordan and Lebanon, absorbing much of the humanitarian impact. A resolution is not yet in sight.

Earlier this month, the leaders of the Group of Eight reached an understanding on achieving a political solution on Syria and committed to bringing the Syrian sides to the negotiatingtable. The Secretary-General reiterated his readiness to convene the Geneva Conference on Syria as soon as possible. He further welcomed the announcement of additional contributions of $1.5 billion in humanitarian aid, which is critical to saving lives.

On the same day, in his message to the international meeting in in Beijing in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace, the Secretary-General stressed that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and safeguarding the two-State solution was no less urgent. The current regional turmoil makes it all the more imperative to build upon the opening created by the diplomatic push by the United States and create a positive momentum towards an Israeli-Palestinian peace that can provide a stabilizing horizon and give hope for the whole region. However, so far there are too few encouraging signs on the prospects for breaking the deadlock. The United Nations has consistently pointed out the risks of prolonged impasse and the consequences of inaction.

The United Nations has welcomed the determined re-engagement of the United States. In March, the United States President underlined that peace was necessary, just and possible. As the international community, we bear a great responsibility in transforming that possibility into reality. Secretary Kerry's several rounds of visits — he announced that he would visit Jerusalem and the region for the fifth time this week — provides the first real opportunity since October 2010 for a serious effort to reach a final status agreement. While United States engagement is central, we are convinced of the need for broader regional and international engagement in support of any peace effort. We also welcome the reaffirmed willingness by Arab States to revive the Arab Peace Initiative. We hope that the Israeli Government will respond positively.

However much the parties need to re-engage in negotiations as the only way to achieve the two-State solution, there must be a substantive and well-prepared framework, as well as a credible timeline, in order for talks to have a chance of success. There is also a need for a conducive environment on the ground, including confidence-building steps. However, while substantive progress is urgently needed, rushing the parties back to the table without having in place the necessary framework and buy-in from both sides would be counter-productive. What is also not needed are unhelpful statements with regard to the prospects for the two-State solution. Rather, progress necessitates serious political commitments by both leaders — Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas — who should show statesmanship, recognize a partner in each other and finally negotiate and achieve a two-State solution, which is a vision that they have both agreed on. However narrow, the current window of opportunity should not be lost.

The de-facto settlement restraint observed earlier this spring has seen signs of unravelling. The Secretary-General has been particularly troubled by reports that planning for hundreds of housing units in the settlement of Itamar, deep in the West Bank, has advanced to the next stage, as is also the case in the outpost of Bruchin. We also note with disappointment that, according to data released by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, during the first quarter of 2013 there were 865 starts in construction of housing units in settlements, representing a 176% increase compared to the equivalent period in 2012 — a seven-year record. Those are unhelpful decisions that undermine progress towards the two-State solution. The Secretary-General reiterates that settlement activity is illegal, and calls on Israel to abide by its commitments under international law and the road map.

A new Palestinian Cabinet was sworn in on 6 June under the leadership of Rami Hamdallah to carry on the administration of the affairs of State until a national consensus Government is formed. However, in an apparent sign of disagreement about certain competencies, Prime Minister Hamdallah tendered his resignation on 20 June, but stayed on as caretaker until a successor was named. That creates renewed uncertainty for a Government still relying considerably on international support and facing a critical period ahead. The United Nations looks forward to continuing to work with the Government of Palestine and President Abbas in support of their state-building agenda and ongoing efforts aimed at a resumption of meaningful peace negotiations. The continued viability of the Palestinian Authority remains a core interest of the United Nations.

One fiscal factor fuelling concern in that regard is the Palestinian Authority's total Government debt of reportedly $4.2 billion and its deficit, which had reached $612 million by the end of May. Donor support has decreased over the past years, and the United Nations is concerned about possible further cuts. Continued donor funding is essential to allow the Palestinian Government to tighten fiscal policy in a manner that does not harm the private sector or essential social spending.

Important meetings took place during and on the margins of the meeting of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea in Jordan last month. The "Breaking the impasse" initiative was unveiled, which we welcome as a serious expression by influential business leaders and public opinion from both sides of their wish for a two-State solution and an urgent appeal to their leaders to realize it now. At the same event, Secretary Kerry announced a large-scale initiative intended to spur economic growth through private investment in the West Bank and Gaza. Those are hopeful signs. However, it is absolutely crucial that progress be made on the political track, absent which sustained growth and private investment will remain elusive and Palestinian accomplishments on the state-building agenda will be difficult to sustain.

The United Nations continues to help to address the humanitarian and development needs of Palestinians in Area C, where lifting Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement, access to land and water, planning and construction would unleash the growth potential. We continue to engage the Israeli Government on a series infrastructure projects in Area C, and we are in the process of securing funding for works supporting the agricultural sector. To more effectively address development needs in Area C, it is imperative that Israeli authorities authorize the 32 plans that hve been submitted for approval, some of which have been pending since June 2010.

Tensions on the ground are also mounting. Violence between Palestinians and settlers continued in the West Bank. A total of five Palestinians, including one woman, were injured by settlers, while six settlers, including four women, were injured by Palestinian stone-throwing. An Israeli bus was shot at yesterday near Nablus, without resulting in injuries. Settler violence against Palestinian property under the so called price-tag attacks also increased sharply, resulting in extensive material damage. Such attacks also targeted Christian sites, including the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem and the Jaffa Orthodox cemetery.

Between 14 and 16 June, Israeli right-wing activists reportedly beat and injured three Palestinian women in West Jerusalem, including a 75-year-old. On 17 June, the tires of 28 cars were punctured in Abu Gosh, a village inside Israel that is also populated by Arab citizens of Israel, and racist slogans were painted on walls. Prime Minister Netanyahu publicly protested such acts as running counter to Jewish commandments and the values of the people of Israel. The day before, the Israeli Government strengthened the State's law-enforcement ability to combat price-tag attacks by declaring their perpetrators an "illegal association". It is hoped that this measure will contribute to preventing such attacks, which must not go unpunished.

The security situation remained comparable to the previous reporting period, and security coordination between Palestinian and Israeli security forces continued despite some clashes. Israeli security forces conducted a total of 457 search-and-arrest operations in the occupied West Bank, resulting in 162 Palestinians injured, including 58 children and eight women. Two members of the Israeli security forces were also injured. Four-hundred and fifty-five Palestinians were arrested by Israeli security forces, including a Hamas Palestinian Legislative Council member on 6 June in Ramallah. On 11 June, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel has foiled five suicide attacks since the start of the year.

The majority of injuries resulted from clashes during Palestinian protests in the occupied West Bank, including against the barrier, which deviates from the Green Line in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (A/ES-10/273). Demolitions of Palestinian property in Area C and in East Jerusalem continued, albeit at a slower pace, with a total of 24 structures demolished, leading to the displacement of 55 Palestinians, including 23 children.

Relative calm returned to Gaza this month, until it was shattered during the night of 23 June when six rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel, reportedly by Islamic Jihad. Two were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defence system, and four landed in southern Israel without causing injuries or damage. In response, Israel conducted three airstrikes into Gaza yesterday, targeting sites allegedly linked to weapons-storage and rocket launching, causing no casualties. Israel also closed the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings for Palestinians. We condemn rocket fire into civilian areas and urge Israeli restraint. All must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians.

We remain concerned about the state of human rights and freedoms in Gaza. That includes our deep concern about four death sentences passed by military courts in Gaza, between 9 May and 20 June, and two executions carried out on 22 June, outside of the Palestinian legal framework. We call on de facto authorities in Gaza to refrain from carrying out further executions.

Despite our ongoing efforts, we unfortunately must report further encroachment on freedoms in Gaza, namely, increasing impediments on humanitarian operations. Along with inappropriate taxation requests, exit restrictions have recently been imposed by the de facto authorities on Palestinian staff of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other organizations, to the point where some staff have not been able to leave Gaza. We call on the de facto authorities to rescind these restrictions, and hope that a solution can be found quickly.

Such measures impair the delivery of much-needed assistance to Palestinians, as does continuing violence. The only possible way forward is the full implementation of the ceasefire understanding reached on 21 November under Egyptian auspices, which calls for calm and the full lifting of the closure. We urge the parties to adhere to its terms to preserve advances and prospects to implement resolution 1860 (2009) in full. Our immediate goals continued to include extending the fishing limit to at least eight nautical miles, allowing the entry of construction material and permitting exports to Israel and transfers from Gaza to the West Bank, while we continue to carry out sizable programmes that address pressing needs.

In that regard, I would note that preliminary results of a joint United Nations survey indicate that food insecurity affects some 1.6 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and has increased to include 34 per cent of households in 2012.

Against such a concerning backdrop, I would nevertheless like to highlight a moment of joy that lifted the spirits of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza alike, when on 22 June a young Gazan refugee, Mohammad Assaf, won the "Arab Idol" televised song contest, watched by millions throughout the region and beyond. Following his victory, Mr. Assaf was named as goodwill ambassador to the Palestinian diaspora by President Abbas and as the first Regional Youth Ambassador for Palestine Refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Turning to Syria, let me emphasize that the overall situation continues to deteriorate as a result of continued violent military confrontation. Direct involvement by Hizbullah fighters inside Syria has given new momentum to the Syrian Government's military approach and contributed to sectarian and political tensions throughout the region. Statements of increased military support to both sides in the conflict only promise further escalation. The Secretary-General has repeatedly stressed his opposition to the transfer of arms and fighters to either side inside Syria.

In the meantime, the conflict is taking a heavy toll on the civilian population in Syria. More than 93,000 people have been reported killed. Civilians continued to flee to neighbouring and regional countries, where the number of refugees from Syria is now close to 1.7 million. United Nations agencies estimate that there are more than 6.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including more than 3 million children. The situation of Palestine refugees in Syria also remains of the utmost concern. More than 60,000 have fled to neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan. There are urgent needs in all sectors of humanitarian assistance.

The Independent Commission of Inquiry continued to document serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and reiterated in its report of 4 June (A/HRC/23/58) that war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations continued apace.

The Secretary-General has insisted that there is no military solution to the conflict. Only a political solution can bring the violence and the suffering of the Syrian people to an end. The Secretary-General continues his engagement with Member States and regional organizations in building on the diplomatic opportunity provided by the understanding reached between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and United States Secretary of State John Kerry on 7 May in Moscow. In that context, Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi and Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman are exploring ways to ensure the success of the Geneva Conference on Syria, which would allow the Syrian parties to jointly determine the full implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) of 30 June 2012. To that effect, they met with Russian and United States representatives in Geneva today.

With regard to the alleged use of chemical weapons, the United Nations mission to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic has so far remained unable to conduct its fact-finding mission inside Syria due to the lack of authorization for acess on the part of the Syrian Government. Several additional allegations of the use of chemical weapons have been brought to the Secretary-General's attention by Member States. The mission will continue to monitor developments and collect available information. The head of mission, Ake Sellstrám, has visited some capitals and is currently pursuing other options for fact-finding activities outside of Syria, including in neighbouring States.

The Council was briefed in detail last week on the tense situation with regard to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) area of operations in the Golan, which we continue to monitor with concern. We have repeatedly called for all violations of the Disengagement Agreement to cease and have urged the parties strictly to abide by their obligations. We remain fully committed to UNDOF's mandate and are actively looking for replacements for the departing Austrian troops.

The negative impact of the conflict in Syria on Lebanon has been more sharply evident in recent weeks. On 25 May, Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah acknowledged Hizbullah's role in the fighting alongside the Government in Syria, while other Lebanese elements are also reported to be providing support to the other side. Fighters from other countries are also reported to be participating in the conflict. Threats of retaliation from Syrian opposition elements and calls by Lebanese Salafi sheikhs for jihad in Syria highlight the very real danger of the threat of a spread of the Syrian conflict to Lebanon. President Sleiman reiterated his calls for all concerned to adhere to the Baabda Declaration. The Secretary-General expressed deep concern about Hizbullah's increased participation in the fighting in Syria, and reiterated how important it was that all Lebanese leaders prevent a dangerous spillover of the conflict in Lebanon and adhere to the Baabda Declaration, as essential to Lebanon's stability and security. On 20 June, President Sleiman called on Hizbullah fighters to return to Lebanon.

During the reporting period, more than 60 shells and rockets were launched from Syria into Lebanon, causing one fatality and a dozen injuries. On 26 May, two rockets were fired into Shiite neighbourhoods in the southern suburbs of Beirut, wounding four people. On 21 June, another rocket was fired into the southern Beirut district of Alley. On 5 and 12 June, Syrian army helicopters fired missiles into the Arsal region of Lebanon. The Lebanese Armed Forces stated that their units in that area had taken defensive measures necessary to react immediately to any further violation. On 18 June, in a letter for transmission to the President of the Security Council, President Sleiman protested the conflicting Syrian parties' infringement of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The violence in Tripoli, which started on 19 May, continued, causing 36 deaths, including those of two members of the Army, and wounding 200 others. Tensions in the northern Beka'a Valley are high, with attacks and clashes on 27 May and 6 June that left three Lebanese soldiers and two gunmen dead. Attacks in Arsal on 11 and 16 June resulted in five fatalities. In a serious development, violence also erupted in the southern city of Sidon, where on 23 and 24 June armed clashes between supporters of a Salafist cleric and the Lebanese Armed Forces left at least 16 soldiers dead and 15 others wounded. That includes at least two soldiers killed in a related attack on Army checkpoints at the entrances to the Ain Al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp outside Sidon. The Secretary-General condemned the attacks on the Lebanese Armed Forces, stressing the importance of fully respecting the authority of the State and its institutions, particularly the Lebanese Armed Forces, under the leadership of President Sleiman. He also reminded all concerned in Lebanon of their responsibility to avoid conflict and uphold the principles of mutual respect and coexistence.

On 31 May, a majority of the Parliament, from both political blocs, voted to extend its mandate by 17 months, thereby postponing the elections scheduled for 16 June until a date to be set before November 2014. Appeals against the extension were put before the Constitutional Council, but due to the lack of a quorum the Council was not able to consider them. The extension of the Parliament's mandate is therefore confirmed. Prime Minister-designate Tammam Salam is resuming consultations aimed at forming a new Government.

The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) along the Blue Line remained broadly quiet but fragile. UNIFIL was able to control some tension between Lebanese civilians and troops of the Israel Defense Forces along the Hasbani/Wazzani river area. Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continued on an almost daily basis and in some instances intensified, notably between 3 and 5 May.

The Middle East is living in dangerous and tragic days, as the scourge of war is once again destroying lives and burying hopes. It is a trying period for the United Nations, and our collective ability to live up to the values and principles of the Charter is being put to a hard test. But however difficult the task, the Security Council and the United Nations at large cannot give up or let a sense of collective impotence erode our sense of responsibility. Resolving conflict and finding a way towards peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for all is possible. But it requires courageous and mutual compromises at the national, regional and international levels, and a commitment to settling conflicts through peaceful means, not war or violence. That is true in Syria as it is elsewhere. It is crucial that all act responsibly and contribute to reversing the negative dynamics at play in the region. The current situation of unresolved conflict and prolonged occupation in the West Bank and Gaza is the cause of much suffering on the Palestinian side, but it is no good for Israel either. We at the United Nations are deeply convinced that achieving a two-State solution, ending the occupation begun in 1967 and ending the conflict, as envisaged in the relevant resolutions of the Council, are in the best interests of both Israelis and Palestinians. Leaders have a choice to make, and a responsibility to their people and future generations. The United Nations will continue to do all it can to help in the search for peace and the realization of the universal and legitimate rights of all people in the region.

The President: I thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.